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ABSTRACT

Sixteen children in five different classrooms in the same, small, rural-suburban school in New Hampshire were observed for 2 years to document what primary children did when they wrote. Eight of the children were observed from age 6 through 7, and eight from 8 through 9. Three researchers were on-site in classrooms 4 days out of 5 for the 2-year project. Data were gathered through child and teacher interviews, direct observation of children through specific protocols, and video recordings of children while composing, conversing with other children, and in conference, as well as through all of the children's written products. Data from observations of child behavior during the writing process together with data from observations of teacher practices led to seven hypotheses: (1) behaviors of writers are ideosyncratic and highly variable; (2) clusters of behaviors should be observed before making decisions about writers; (3) scope and sequence curricula have little relevance in helping writers develop; (4) the scaffolding-conference approach is the best response to the variable writer; (5) let students write daily, sustain selections longer, and write at predictable times; (6) let children choose most of their topics because it assists them with voice, heightens semantic domain, skill of narrowing topic, and basic decision making; and (7) skills are best taught within the context of the child's own writing. (Appendixes include copies of research articles, selected chapters from a book, articles related to the study, and data examples.) (HOD)

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# FINAL REPORT

For NIE Grant No. G-78-0174

Project No. 8-34/9-0963

September 1, 1978 - August 31, 1981

# A Case Study Observing the Development of Primary Children's Composing, Spelling, and Motor Behaviors During the Writing Process

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CS 206876

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The teachers in this study were more than professionals under glass. Rather, there were colleagues in this research venture, supplying valuable information from their child data. Behind the teachers was the principal, Jean Robbins, the reason for being in Atkinson in the first place. Research such as ours demanded the backing of a strong principal. We had one.

My two colleagues, Lucy Calkins and Susan Sowers, were the heart of this research venture. For two years they observed, questioned, analyzed, wrote, published, and shared their data with thousands of persons. Their insights, critiques, energy, and ability to show children as themselves were what made the data lifelike and usable.

Another group of persons worked at the University of New Hampshire. Chief among these was Professor Donald Murray who gave unceasing help

for four years. He contributed his years of experience in investigating the composing process and through his personal, eighteen-foot-shelf collection of what writers have said about writing from early Greeks to yesterday. Even more his hours of listening and help with manuscripts for Susan, Lucy and myself were a constant source of encouragement. Professor Tom Newkirk has also been a helpful critic with data and early manuscripts. Special thanks are also due Rebecca Rule for her writing and work with her colleague Virginia Stuart on the detailed work on child concepts of writing.

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Donald H. Graves
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# STUDY SUMMARY

## 1.0 WHAT DID THIS STUDY SET OUT TO DO AND WHY?

This study set out to document *what* primary children did when they wrote. Data were gathered over a two year period, following the same children, in order to show how they changed what they did in the course of writing. The research task was to be present when the children wrote in their classrooms, and to record, describe, identify, and sequence the order of their behaviors during the composing process.

The study was done because children simply haven't been observed while writing. Most research about children's composing has been retrospective. Extensive analyses have been made of children's written products, and interviews and have been given to children asking them to recall how they wrote, but such data only provide partial information about what might happen during the writing process.

Worse, school curricula across the country are often based on suppositions about what children do when they write. Teaching is an active process where teacher behaviors meet child behaviors, yet why children behave as they do when composing is anyone's guess if there hasn't been systematic observation over time. Teachers need a forward and backward perspective when they deal with a child's paper; they need to know where the child will be going and where the child has been developmentally in order to understand the behaviors of the present moment.

It would be unheard of in child development research to explain child behavior solely on an interventive or retrospective basis. There is no substitute for being there, for extensive periods of observation to record data when children play, interact with parents, materials, and their entire environment.

## 2.0 HOW DID WE GO ABOUT DOING IT?

Sixteen children in five different classrooms in the same, small, rural-suburban school in New Hampshire were observed for two years. Eight of the children were observed from age six through seven, and eight from age eight through nine. The children were chosen because of their differences along pre-selected criteria of language, composing, spelling, and motor performance. The intent was to have children from both grade levels with low, middle, and high writing abilities in order to see if behaviors from one level to another were repeated as the children changed over two years of writing.

Three researchers were on-site in classrooms four days out of five for the two year project. Data were gathered through child and teacher interviews, direct observation of children through specific protocols, video recordings of children while composing, conversing with other children, and in conference, as well as through all of the children's written products.

Although case-study data were gathered primarily on the sixteen selected children, there were many intervals over the two year period when these children were not writing. Researchers then collected data on other children who were writing at that time. There were also all-class data gathered in punctuation and spelling to serve as back-up information to process data from the case studies.

The data were analyzed through a variety of procedures depending on the type of information collected (See Appendix 10.0 for examples).

1. Video Data: Language and behavior analysis in relation to evolving text was done by set protocol. Charts were made of shifting balances over a two year period. Utterances were assessed in context for concept level and change.

2. Child Utterance Data: These came from video-audio recordings, observations of teacher conferences, and discussions with other children. Data were analyzed according to 26 concepts. Definitions of concepts came from childrens' utterances. Extensive work with inter-rater reliability was done at several points in the assessment of concepts.

3. Direct Observation: Through set protocols, all sixteen children were observed before, during, and after composing. Behaviors were charted to show shifts in:

   A. Overt to covert activity
   B. Growth in time and space
   C. Uses of revision
   D. Problem solving

4. Product Data: All written work from the children was xeroxed. This included all copies of drafts. Product data have been charted to chow changes in use of:

   A. Punctuation
   B. Handwriting
   C. Spelling
   D. Topic
   E. Patterns of writing quality
   F. Prosodics
   G. Person and territory
   H. Information

5. Interview-Conference Data: Interventions along standard, informal question formats were asked of the children before, during, and after composing by researchers and teachers. Questions and responses have been placed on computer and analyzed for complexity, sequence, and function along the 26 concept lines.

Substantial analysis of the above data is complete, but because of the amount gathered, there is virtually an inexhaustible supply of new variables yet to be examined, as well possible interrelationships between those variable already investigated.

## 3.0 WHAT DID WE FIND?

### 3.1 The Writing Process

The writing process in this study was defined as a series of operations leading to the solution of a problem. The process begins when the writer consciously or unconsciously starts a topic and is finished when the written piece is published. Many professionals would argue that the process continues to throb even after publication.

Children show us what is involved in the writing process through the many sub-processes that contribute to a finished product. Significant sub-processes include topic selection, rehearsing, information access, spelling, handwriting, reading, organizing, editing, and revising. These ingredients for writing are much the same for six-year-olds as they are for more advance ten-year olds. Six-year-olds, because of overt behaviors, show the underpinnings of ingredients before they go underground and become implicit. The following defines several important ingredients:

1. Topic Choice - There is a process to topic selection, again, conscious or unconscious. Choice can be limited to a topic on the board given by the teacher, or it may be embedded in a previous piece. The child may go on a search through interviewing other children, or reviewing a list in a folder labeled "future topics". When topics are self-selected, part of the process seems to be "voice-matching" with what feels right today; the child measures intentions against his audience, which may be his classmates, teacher, or even parents. Choice may also involve weeks, months, or it may be a snap judgement based on a whim. More needs to studied about topic choice because it probably has much more to do with subsequent behaviors in writing than we know (See Appendix 8.1 and 9.8).

2. Rehearsal - Rehearsal refers to the conscious or unconscious preparation writers make for what is to follow. It may take the form of daydreaming, reading, sketching, working with blocks, journal entries, or discussion of events. A discovery draft can be spoken of as a rehearsal for the next draft (See Appendix 8.1).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 3. | Composing - | Composing includes selection of information, mechanics, the part in relation to the whole. The part may be letter formation, sound-symbol correspondence, the final stage of Vygotsky's process of symbolization, or reading for orientation (See Appendix 8.1). |
| 4. | Reading - | The function of reading the writer's own text varies according to the developmental level of the writer and differs significantly from the reading of another person's text. The writer can read to reorient, search for errors in conventions, and check appropriateness of information, organization, or language (See Appendix 8.1). |
| 5. | Revision - | Revision, or "seeing again" ranges from simple adjustments in spelling and letter formation, to major additions, deletions, and reorganizations of information. At the lowest level it could be called proofreading (See Appendixes 7.13, 7.2, 8.1, 8.7). |

There is no set order to the writing process. It cannot be construed as simply a matter of topic choice, rehearsal, reading, composing, and revising. It is highly ideosyncratic and varies within the writer from day to day. A person may discover a new topic in the midst of writing another. The end of a piece may be rehearsed while eating breakfast, especially if the writer knows she will be writing that day in school. Thus, the unearthing of process ingredients and their recurrent appearance is an important finding in this study.

### 3.2 Development of writers

The development of writing ability among the children appeared to fall into sequences. These sequences were useful to trace, but great care had to be taken to view several simultaneously before making any decisions about the child's writing development. The following are among the most significant sequences used to trace changes in writers' behaviors.

3.21 Time and Space: This was the most fruitful combination of factors by which to assess the development of young writers. Three factors were viewed in relation to each other: (See also Appendix 8.4).

1. The Page: At first children must discover the use of space; or how to relate their bodies and small muscles to a regular sequencing (time) across the page. Letter follows letter, ranging from indiscriminate chains to vertical and reverse orders. Later, when children see writing as a temporary process, as in a draft, they begin to break down the sides, placing extra symbols as direction markers for the next draft.

2. The Process: The parameters of process define space, while the eventsfrom start to finish represent time markers filling that space. When the process parameters are narrow, writing has a tenuous connection to preceding events; the decision to compose may have been spontaneous, but of very short duration, perhaps as little as two or three minutes. In this case, process resembles spontaneous play. Process broadens when the writer rehearses when not composing, contemplates a piece for weeks or months, and composes many drafts prior to publication. This writer can transcend the constraints of the present draft; he can move back and forth between past, present, and possible future products.

3. Information: Early information has tenuous logic (time) and occupies little space (the subject or event). The simplicity of the choices connects highly disparate events and fills the subject space with only a few lines.

3.22 External to Internal: Writing is a highly external event in the beginning. Children draw, and talk with other children. They need to see and hear what they mean. Later external language becomes inner language. The child has put mechanical conventions (spelling, motor) behind him. Problem-solving shifts to topic and information and is particularly done with the absence of overt behaviors. (See Appendix 7.14)

3.23 Egocentric to Sociocentric: Early writing closely resemebles play. The child writes for the sake of writing. The opinions of others about the quality of his work are not heard. He feels his pieces are basically good and he experiments fearlessly. Seldom does the teacher hear, "I'm stuck. I don't know what to do." The child sees little discrepancy between intention and performance.

Gradually, however, the child begins to hear questions an and concerns of others. Mechanics are placed behind him and his own critical reading level is raised. He perceives discrepancies between his message and what is understood (See Appendix 8.3).

3.24 Explicit to Implicit: When children first write, they bring their papers to the teacher and before she can read them, they tell her what the papers say. The child makes the message explicit through conversation and also through accompaning drawings. They supply what they think may be missing in print.

In transition from oral to written discourse, children include many oral features (prosodics) in their pieces. In later stages they put everything into the message (bed to bed story) with little selection or valuing given to the narrative.

Children eventually create more meaning through heightening certain information and excluding others. They raise the level of reader participation by implying meanings, suspending action, and using words with greater precision and economy.

3.24 (cont.) At first then, the pieces were shorter with logical gaps, then expanded to an overtold level. As writing became more implicit, the pieces were contracted to a level of greater meaning (See Appendix 8.3).

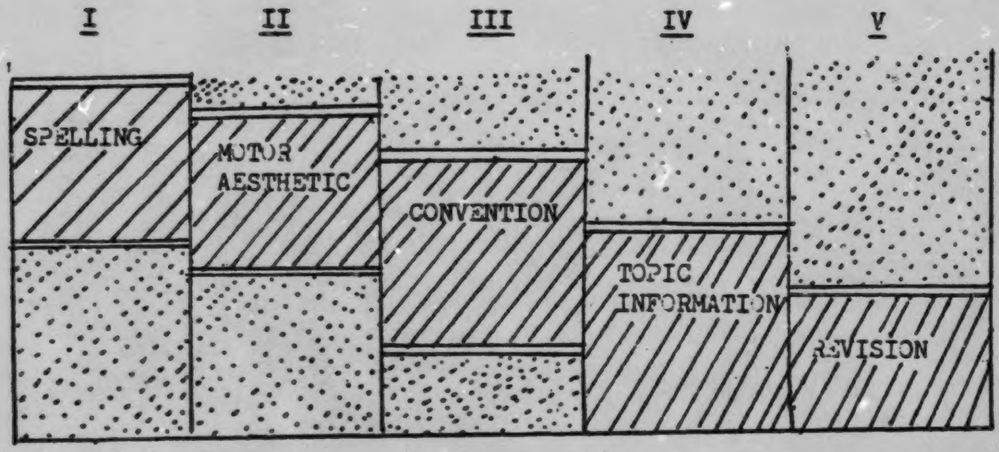
## 3.3 The Process of Development and Revision

Children show us what they see when they change something. The child notices a discrepancy between intention and a letter, word, or sentence, and makes a change depending on what he thinks is important in the writing process. Thus children's writing development can be monitored by recording the changes they make while composing.

In our study, problem-solving was broken into five categories: spelling, motor/aesthetic (appearance on the page), convention, (marking off meaning units with spaces, punctuation), topic/information, and revision. These categories are common to any act of writing, and when the children first began to write, they functioned in all of them. The children were unaware of most of the problems they solved, especially thoses placed in the "automatic" category. A child who revised extensively, for instance, was hardly aware of spelling unless he found a particular word difficult to spell. Problem-solving became a conscious act when the child spoke outloud of his intention to make a change in his piece.

The following figure shows the sequence of problem-solving categories and the relationship of unconscious to conscious activity. The diagonal lines indicate when a category was dominant, or part of the child's consciousness. The stippled areas show when that activity was "underground" or unconscious. There are no ages assigned to these categories because they are irrelevant. There is evidence that some six-year-olds may go as far as category V in one year, while, on the other hand, some writer because of development or teaching emphasis, may never get beyond the first three categories in four years. The self-diagnosed poor speller or handwriter may go for a lifetime wrestling with the same difficulties.

FIGURE 1 : THE SEQUENCE OF PROBLEM-SOLVING DURING THE WRITING PROCESS



The order of problem-solving follows the above five categories. Children first changed spelling, almost simultaneously letter formation and aesthetics, conventions, then topic and information. Problem-solving takes on greater significance when in topic and information.

One way children show us general trends in development is by where they place information when adding to a draft. The easiest place to add information is at the end. It is the most visible, most recently completed and there is room at the bottom of the page. The beginning of the piece is the next choice. It is a recapping of a personal narrative and there may also be room at the top of the page. How a piece starts is clearer than after it gets underway. The interior of the narrative, however, is the most difficult place to add information. Adding information in the middle demands a strong sense of chronology and logic. The child must understand what has come before and after the information being inserted into the text.

Calkins has shown us in our study of revision with eight-year-old children that revision begins with the addition of information at the end of a child's piece (See Appendix 7.13). From this data four categories of eight-year-old revisors emerged:

I. Writes successive drafts without looking back to earlier drafts. Does not reread, or reconsider what has been written and therefore does not weigh options. Much of the writing is left unfinished. New information can only be added at the end.

II. Can refine an early draft but refinement is of minor consequence with some changes in spelling or punctuation. Content and structure of piece remain unchanged. Will at least reread piece and come up with new information, but cannot insert it into text.

III - Keeps shifting between refining and abandoning and beginning new drafts, as in catagory II. Is extremely restless; reading level leaves the child dissatisfied with his text but he seems powerless to move to a level of personal satisfaction. The child can add information into the interior of text. This child is in transition to category IV.

IV - Revision results from interaction between writer and draft, internalized audience, and the evolving sugject. Does reread to see what he has said and to discover what he wants to say. There is a constant vying between intended meaning and discovered meaning, between the forward motion of making and the backward motion of assessing. Can insert any information into text, make major reorganizations, line out, use symbols to manipulate information, and can see information as temporary, moving toward meaning.

Some advanced writers scarcely revised at all. They had such a well- developed inner language, had internalized so many thinking schemes, and were so strongly oriented in the process and information components of time and space, that their revisions occurred internally. How extensive these internal revisions were remains unknown. One eight-year-old, for example, wrote, "A cheetah would make a sports car look like a turtle," as her lead to a piece on cheetahs. At the time of the writing, the researcher could perceive no external language, drawing, or assistance of any kind, Later, in the second year of the study, this same child was advanced enough to articulate some of her thinking processes to Calkins (See Appendix 7.14).

Further evidence of internalization of the revision process was seen in the category IV children in the second year of the study. Their drafts were fewer, their first drafts were of higher quality, and decisions about changes were made earlier at the point of topic selection or lead composition. As will be seen in the concept data, these same children became much more articulate about their composing processes. Their ability to explain the writing process increased as they externalized less in their drafts.

### 3.4 Concepts

All of the childrens' utterances over the two-year period were classified by concept with the exception of .029 that were too ambiguous to classify. Ambiguity was greatly reduced because the utterances fell in the midst of other data gathered during the writing process or conferences with teacher or researcher.

The following concepts were identified:

Standard
Process
Information
Information selection
Information addition
Information deletion
Experience
Experience verification
Audience
*Audience interest (self)
Audience interest (others)
Audience - clarify
Audience - clarify - others
*Audience - no need to consider
*Neatness
Mechanics
Drawing
Feelings

---

* These concepts did not provide enough information to make statements across the children. They did, however, provide enough to begin a concept profile. For example, "no need to consider audience" was thin in data across the children, but polarized at one end of the spectrum to show that just six and seven-year-olds cited it.

Motivation
*Action
Action - sequence of
Action - frequency of
Organization

Topic
Language
Length
*Length - needs to be shorter
*Length - needs to be longer

Although many years' work on the concept data is still needed, several catagories of concept research emerged from this study:

1. Definitions of concepts
2. Which concepts are used
3. General orders of concept use
4. Changes in concept density
5. Profile of one concept: topic
6. Interrelationships of concepts

### 3.41 Concept Definitions

A major finding was simply the definitions of concepts. Because of their slippery nature, six months work went into the defining phase. The stability of definitions was then checked on several inter-rater reliability assessments (See Appendix 10.2).

Several of the concepts still need to be broken down into other concepts because their defintions need further delineation.** I particularly refer to the five concepts used most frequently and listed below.

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** For example, process could be broken down into concepts of various phases of the writing process. When does the child use rehearsal, specific problem-solving strategies?

The number in parentheses indicates the percentage of total utterances which use the concept:

Process - 21% (136)
Standard - 15% (601)
Information - 9% (601)
Topic - 7% (445)
Organization - 5% (345)

### 3.42 What Concepts are Used

What concepts the children attended to as well as ignored gave an interesting picture of where they were in the understanding of the writing process. Susie, age 8-9, made very many statements about feelings, standards and organization, but she made very few about drawing or the need for greater length. On the other hand, she uses just about all of the 27 concepts. Six-year-old John talks about information, topic, and drawing, but he doesn't make any statements about audience or language. Thus, although some generalizations can be made across children, the more significant data lies within children. More work needs to be done in this area. Each concept needs to be broken down into heirarchies. The higher level utterances will show more clearly if they are placed in chronological order.

### 3.43 General Order of Concept Use

If all data on concepts across six, seven, eight and nine-year-old children are combined, a number of trends are apparent:

1. The heaviest use of drawing concept is with six-year-olds and it decreases with each successive year.

2. Statements about organization increase with each year from six through nine.

3. Six and seven-year-olds use very few statements about language. Eight and nine-year-olds, especially those into revision, speak about language and its more precise use.

4. Eight and nine-year-olds make many more statements proportionately about feelings than six and seven-year-old children. As the characters become more developed in writing, or as they recall more details of personal experience, more feelings are cited.

5. The sequencing of action is much more important to six and seven-year-olds than eight and nine-year-olds. The early development of narrative would require this, whereas with older children their pieces have become more selective, indeed, some of the chronologies changed by the advanced writers.

### 3.44 Concept Density

Children seldom make utterances with only one concept involved. Those who do are generally six years of age, as in the simple process statement, "I'm going to finish this today." A more advanced nine-year-old writer, on the other hand, will make statements that are much more dense with writing concepts as in this spontaneous statement by Andrea:

> I thought the first (lead) was good but I think (SD)
> this was even better and now I'm going to keep (SD)
> going until I find one I really like and I may
> take parts of each one but after my Dad takes a (P) (IS)
> shower, my mother does and she wears a flowered (O)
> robe - - but I don't know if that is important to (T)
> my story. I'll put lots of different things for
> how I could put my father on the sofa and after (IS)
> I'll choose.

Andrea's statement contained the following concepts: standard (SD), information selection (IS), organization (O), topic (T), process (P), and information selection again (IS). There is also much overlap; in the same breath, Andrea expressed information selection within the writing process. The more advanced children became, the more they expressed reasons for their choices and the more concepts became embedded in each other. Notice how Brian's concepts changed over two years:

**Percentage of Concepts per Utterance by Semester**

| | Fall '78 | | Spring '79 | | Fall '79 | | Spring '80 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | n | | n | | n | | n |
| 1 concept or more | 100 | 11 | 100 | 15 | 100 | 76 | 100 | 105 |
| 2 concepts or more | 82 | 9 | 87 | 13 | 88 | 67 | 88 | 92 |
| 3 concepts or more | 27 | 3 | 33 | 5 | 56 | 43 | 67 | 70 |
| 4 concepts or more | 0 | 0 | 20 | 3 | 31 | 24 | 31 | 23 |
| 5 concepts or more | 0 | 0 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| 6 concepts or more | 0 | 0 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| 7 concepts | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 |

Although Brian was not speaking nearly as much in the first year of the study, perhaps it is all the more significant that with a higher voulme of statements about writing, his percentages of concept embeddings increased during the second year.

### 3.45 Profile of a Concept - Topic

One of the 27 concepts, topic, was examined in the context of utterances to determine a profile of high and low limits of the concept, and to come up with categories that differentiated the levels of concept use. The 445 statements were ordered according to rough criteria for determinging hierarchies. Ultimately all of the concepts will be ordered chronologically as well as by level, to produce a clearer profile of concept use.

The following are characteristic of four levels of topic concepts:

I. The topic is the story. The child must relate the entire story if asked what his piece is about. The child cannot identify the topic separate from the story. Q.: "What is your piece about?" A.: "The cowboy will climb on his horse and ride the road to town and . . . "

II. The topic is what the story is about. The child specifies topic/title and goes on to recite the story. The child can name a topic. Q.: "What is your piece about?" A.: "It's going to be about a cowboy. He'll climb on his horse and ride the road to town and . . ." The topic occurs to the child and the story follows.

III. The topic controls the story. The child selects information to fit the topic. The child uses concept of topic with one other writing concept. Q.: "What's your piece going to be about?" A.:

III. (cont.) "It's going to be only about Cowboy Sam and his riding adventures, not about what he does on the ranch . . ." Child selects topic, and the story follows, but the child expresses beginnings of options.

IV. The story controls the topic. The child selects the topic based on a writing logic. The child integrates concept of topic with other writing concepts. Q: "What are you going to write about?" A.: "I'm going to write about Cowboy Sam's riding adventures because I can put some action with good details in . . .but part way through I might find out some new stuff and I'll have to revise things." The topic evolves, twists and turns as the child is responsive to the dictates of the information.

### 3.5 Scaffolding

The term scaffolding was first used by Jerome Bruner to explain temporary structures placed around children's language to assist their development. Susan Sowers, research associate on the NIE study team, took teacher-child conference data and examined them in light of the following characteristics deemed important in scaffolding:

1. Response should be predictable.
2. Limit the focus.
3. Allow for reversible role relationships.
4. Demonstrate solutions.
5. Limit and "make familiar the semantic domain."
6. Maintain a playful atmosphere.

The conference in our study refers to the discussion-review of a child's paper with the teacher, researcher, or other child in the room. From hundreds of conference transcripts, and the printouts of concept data from language interactions, the following hypotheses have been formulated about successful conferences based on the scaffolding concept:

1. Writing conferences follow predictable sequences: content discussion is followed by a discussion of mechanics. Often readers ask the writer for an evaluation of the piece, "Which is the best part?" "How does it compare with others you have written?" As part of our data gathering, children were asked to tell what happened in conference or simulate the conference with another child. Children of both high and low developmental levels from six through ten were able to relate the basic elements contained in conference.

2. Teachers limit the focus and mark critical features (See page 31) in the conference. It is rare when more than one skill or one major aspect of the child's information are chosen for discussion.

3. Conferences allow for reversible role relationships between speaker and hearer. Because conference structures are predictable, the child knows how to reverse roles. He asks questions of the teacher and makes comments about content or skills in anticipation of teacher practice. Children are are also able to conduct conferences with each other, independently of the teacher. (See Appendix 7.8). There are as well instances where children have conducted conferences with themselves, "Let's see now, this beginning doesn't have enough action in it. What do I want it to be about?"

4. Demonstrate solutions: Through the oral conference with child, teacher and paper present, it was possible to show within the limited focus how to solve problems. Most of the teachers waited for the child to encounter voice or a problem before moving into solution demonstrations. Frequently the children were able to invent solutions without teacher demonstration.

5. Limit and Make Familiar the Semantic Domain. Children chose about 90% of their own topics, thus making it easier for teachers to control the semantic domain. The language of process was introduced slowly and within the context of the child's paper. This is probably

5. (cont.) why the concept-semantic densities of childrens' statements about writing changed so rapidly.

6. Playful atmosphere. A high degree of humor persists in conferences. The playful, humor-filled atmosphere prevails because of predictability, role-reversals, limited focus, and the highly familiar semantic domain.

## 3.6 Transitions from Oral to Written Discourse

Every child and possibly many professional writers, makes the transition at his level from oral to written discourse. Four stages of transition were apparent in the study and are listed below. Transition factors are closely allied with what writers call "voice", the writer's individual imprint on the piece (See Appendixes 8.5 and 7.5).

### 3.61 I - Overt and Early Manifestations of Speech

1. Speaking simultaneous to the writing. For every grapheme, children will use about 20 phonemic units, plus eight other language functions (See Appendix 10.4).
2. Para-language and the paper. Children continue to use a wide repertoire of kinesics, haptics, and proxemics in relation to the paper. These are usually accompanied by sound effects, particularly with boys.
3. Drawing. The child supplies visual context (as in speech) through drawing. The child draws before writing.
4. Letters and words run together. There are fewer breaks for meaning and thus resembles oral discourse.
5. Prosodics in capitalization and blackened letters, mixture of upper and lower case letters. These become much more sophisticated in Stage II, then are significantly reduced in Stage II.

### 3.62 II - Page Explicit Transitions

1. Speaking simultaneous to the writing. There is

b

far less overtness of a speaking or sounding nature as in stage I. Transition factors are shown in what happens on the page.

2. Drawing. The child may draw after writing. The drawing now is more of an illustration than a rehearsal, thus losing the speech transition factor.

3. Prosodics. Many more capitalizations for speech meaning function, use of blackened letters, stress words written two lines high, sometimes underlined. Particular use of interjections, exclamation and quotation marks. The child wants sound to be read from the page.

4. Para-language. Less overt than Stage I but at times writes very closely to the paper (nose an inch from the point of the moving pen). I think it is an unusual use of a proxemic but am not sure yet.

5. Frequent conversations with companions. A write, converse, write rhythm suggestive of switching in conversation. This is sometimes seen in Stage I but is particularly pronounced at this time.

3.63 Stage III - Speech Features Implicit in Text

1. Less overt sound off the page. Interjections, exclamation marks all but disappear.

2. Early drafts contain prosodics. Capitalization of important words (but not those capitalized according to convention).

3. Use of information now contains a high degree of selectivity that makes text flow like speech but selection is of high quality.

4. Little conversation with neighbors of a "play-by play" nature. Conversation is more related to the writing process itself - "How did you solve that one?" "Do you think this is a good lead?"

5. Use of adjectives and adverbs: Some writers move through a stage of excessive use of adjectives and adverbs, a kind of noun and verb propping. The noun or verb may be poorly chosen or the writer just feels that they cannot stand on their own, or that the

> extensive use of adjectives constitutes good writing. This is a characteristic of some writers in this stage, but just where it fits into the total scheme I do not yet know.

### 3.7 Handwriting

The original study design called for the tracing of handwriting variables for their influence on composing. After a short time, this aspect of the study was abandoned, even though data continued to be gathered on handwriting itself. A more meticulous approach to data gathering may have unearthed more.

Two children who were diagnosed as writers with handwriting problems were included in the original study design. Both children saw themselves as people with handwriting problems. As soon as the children wrote daily, controlled the choice of their topics, and had specific responses to the content of their pieces by teachers and other children, the handwriting barrier disappeared. Other than handwriting speed, there was little connection that could be made between composing and the handwriting variable.

Nevertheless, it was fruitful to observe how children changed in their use of handwriting, since it became a very important area to monitor the writer's use of time and space, views of information and the process itself. Stages of handwriting development could be traced in general terms and are reported below:

1. GET IT DOWN PHASE. Letters follow each other in sequence, the ingredients are present as words (not necessarily separated) move in columns, circle, or run together across a page. These are the child's first explorations of ordering a message. Letters may be in both upper and lower case with upper case in demination.

2. FIRST AESTHETICS. Overlaps a little with "get-it-down". Soon erasures start, presenting other kinds of control problems. Children are more systematic in left-to-right composing, with more spaces inserted between words. Less use of upper case letters, smaller size to letters overall. Pressure is more evenly distributed in letters composed.

3. GROWING CONVENTIONS. More focus on "the right way" to shape, layout letters on the page. Concern for conventions in spelling, punctuation also accompanies the event. Concerned about appearance of page to others.

4. STAGE OF BREAKING CONVENTIONS. This stage is quite dependent on teaching. If teachers ask questions that make children want to add information, then conventions associated with "first draft" writing only have to be broken. Words and sentences are lined out; children erase very little. Arrows, symbols, appear with information written up margins, across top and bottom of the page.

5. LATER AESTHETICS. Children who have acquired greater ownership of their writing through additional information, have written several drafts, can be fussier about final copy. An interest in calligraphy, appearance of published piece, can reach a refinement not seen in earlier stages.

Handwriting speed seems to be an important variable in the quality of writing produced. Children who wrote at a speed beyond eight words per minute had better products. It appeared that they had internalized more of the process elements (handwriting, spelling, other conventions) and had a better understanding of part-whole relationships of information.

But there are many exceptions both on the high and low side of handwriting speed. It is merely one factor among others to observe.

### 3.8 Spelling

Data on spelling come from two principal sources: early acquisition of spelling in grade one, and the use of spelling in drafts at the third and fourth grade level. Spelling data were probably influenced by the particular methods of instruction and therefore need description.

All of the children in first grade were permitted to use spelling inventions as a means to composing their pieces. Most of the children who had strong ear for sounds used this method, with the exception of a few who already knew how to spell very well. This means that the children were allowed to spell words the way that they sounded, and to use words as accurately as they could at the time. During conferences, the teacher would help by focusing on sound-symbol correspondences within the context of the child's piece.

Preliminary hypotheses on childrens' spelling are listed as follows:

1. Children use very different application of spelling under different assessment conditions.
    - A. Isolated sounds: When tested on knowledge of consonants in initial, medial, and final positions, long and short vowels, blends and digraphs, the children exhibited 90% accuracy.
    - B. Isolated words: When tested on ability to spell 20 isolated words, applying the above same skills, children exhibited 50% accuracy (See Appendix 9.5).

C. During Composing: When tested under com-composing conditions, using the same words, children exhibited 30% accuracy.

In short, the more spelling was assessed in isolation from the composing process, the more accurate the child spelled. The only true assessment of spelling, however, is during the writing process, because the child has to attend to many things simultaneously. The other assessments, A and B, are useful in that they may show how a child is changing before spelling words while composing, but studies of these shifts from A to B to C have not yet been done.

2. Children who invent may use several spellings of the same word within the same writing. Until the word is stabilized in a set invention, the child will continue to invent.

3. Spelling is in a constant state of evolution during the inven spelling phase. (See Appendix 10.1 and 7.2). The spiral, however, is toward more and more accurate spelling with many regressions along the way when other composing variables take precedence.

4. Invented spelling relies heavily on "ear for sound", consistent use of 1-1 sound-symbol correspondences. As children "complete" fuller spellings of words, they become more sensitive to the visual memory elements containing irregular correspondence - e.g. kiss. Children's reading of their published material where their invented spellings were in traditional spellings, plus reading of other books, contributed to final spellings.

5. Children write in order to read their messages at another time. But early inventions, either because of too few cues (bc = book) or words run together (Ilcthsbc = I liked his book) cannot be read back. It would appear that words have commerce; when there are three cues in initial, medial, and final positions, and the context provides enough help, (I lct hs buk), words can be read back.

6. Children who have difficulty with spelling and who draft, change their spellings from draft to draft until more accurate spellings are reached in final draft form. In the case of Brian, although nine years

> of age, he used spelling inventions in early drafts, then brought in more visual features when arriving at the final draft. This is not necessarily a developmental phenomenon since the teacher permitted, even encouraged, an emphasis on content in early drafts, with surface features to be cared for in the final draft.

## 3.9 Punctuation

Punctuation data was gathered from an intervention study between one classroom that stressed punctuation rules outside of the writing process context, and another classroom that emphasized punctuation within the context of children's pieces (See Appendix 7.7 and 9.3). The defintions that each group gave are typified in the following responses to the question, "What do periods do?"

> Rule Group - "They tell you when the sentence ends."
>
> Context Group - "They let you know where the sentence ends, so otherwise one minute you'd be sledding down the hill and the next minute you'd be inside the house, without even stopping."

From this data, it was apparent that children's understanding of punctuation depended on the context in which it was taught. The use of punctuation, consequently, also varied, as the four categories listed below indicate:

1. Usage preceded nomenclature when children used punctuation forms in context of their own pieces. They used such forms as commas, quotation marks, and colons, without knowing their names.

2. Nomenclature preceded usage when taught in isolation of the child's paper.

3. Children needed many more punctuation forms when they are revising drafts. As information moved toward clarity, punctuation demands increased in relation to heightened understandings about intentions of the text.

4. Punctuation was more difficult to choose when the writer searched for meaning in an early draft.

The challenge in assessing punctuation data is to separate the teacher variable from the child's own development or order of perceptions. One measure, the child's actual performance in relation to his statements about punctuation, was not carried out. A major project remains to be done in monitoring statements in relation to use.

## 4.0 SEVEN HYPOTHESES ON IMPLICATION OF FINDINGS

Data from child behavior during the writing process together with data from teacher practices lead to hypotheses about teachers can do to help children write. The seven hypotheses that follow were selected because they represent broad, fundamental issues in the teaching of writing. Specifics about day-to-day practices are available in sixteen chapters of Writing: Teachers and Children at Work, By Donald H. Graves, to be published in 1982 by Heinemann.

### 4.1 Behaviors of Writers Are Ideosyncratic and Highly Variable.

The teaching of writing is a response to what a writer shows either in oral or written statements. Until a child writes or speaks, it is difficult for the teacher to know what to do because of the inherent ideosyncracies or variabilities of each writer. Just as quarterbacks don't make a move until the defense is read, teachers don't respond until the child shows where he is in both information and process on that particular day.

The purpose of research is to note similarities in order to make generalizations. Many similarities were seen among the children when they wrote, but as the study progressed, individual exceptions to the data increased in dominance. In short, every child had behavioral characteristics in the writing process that applied to that child alone. It is our contention, based on this information, that such variablity demands a waiting, responsive type of teaching.

Calkins data on stages of revision highlighted the similarities and differences issue (See Appendix 7.13). For example, Calkins identified an "interacter" type composer, a child who saw writing as clay-like and manipulable, the information as temporary and evolving. Children in this category shared this perception, yet functioned differently in its application. Amy made internal revisions, "thinking through" several drafts without making many changes on the paper. Andrew made progressively fewer revisions, while Brian wrote more and more drafts.

The ability to sense ideosyncracies will determine the success or failure of the writing process. One teacher may see revision as worthy of a classroom mandate, and remain unaware that Amy revises internally. Another teacher may not realize that although Brian revises extensively on most drafts, today may not be a good day to ask him to revise. Teachers who respond, who follow what children say and do, will be able to see differences among writers, and be better able to help the individual child write.

## 4.2 Observe Clusters of Behaviors Before Making Decisions About Writers.

Teacher assistance can not be based on one variable because of the variable nature of the writer. A teacher should therefore look at a cluster of behaviors during the writing process - the child's use of the page, process, and information - before making a judgement on how to help. Even then, the teacher should suspend judgement until she has listened carefully to the child's intentions.

Case studies can help teachers see clusters of behaviors because the full context of composing and discussion is reported, as opposed to the discussion of isolated variables. Teachers can then transfer cluster information to their own classrooms.

## 4.3 Scope and Sequence Curricula Have Little Relevance to How Writers Develop.

In scope and sequence curricula, all the skills needed in writing are assigned various levels at which each is to be taught. I suggested in my proposal for this study that this approach was not based on developmental evidence, and promised to make inroads on the problem. My promise was a false one. There is evidence for behavior sequences of skills acquisition, but it is too closely connected with the context in which it is taught to make specific conclusions. For example, a fifth of first graders used quotation marks accurately because they were given the skill when conversation appeared in their writing. Some first grade children were capable of making several revisions, and a few top fourth grade children revised a selection over a three week period. Some children in grade one used colons, commas in a series, and question and exclamation marks.

If scope and sequence are not used because of child variability, then teacher responsibility increases. Teachers can provide individual curricular responses only if they know the writing process and the development of the children who use it. The curriculum content is within children, and the teacher who knows the full range of tools can make it manifest. The teacher will know those tools if they are used her own writing.

## 4.4 Scaffolding - Conference Approach Is the Best Response to the Variable Writer.

The conference process was the heart of the writing program in our study. Our data on conferences, concept changes, and improvements in writing, document the importance of such an approach. It is the best answer to date on dealing with writer variability and ideosyncracies.

Because of writer variability, the conference structure should be highly predictable, almost ritualistic in order and setting. Predictability creates consistency and a comfortable, familiar environment. Within this setting, the teacher can introduce appropriate imbalances - unpredictable statements and questions - that will stimulate child growth and learning.

When conferences go well, the child does most of the talking, teaching his teacher about a subject he knows. The teacher follows the child, reflects the information to keep the child on track. She is observing the child's understanding of the writing process.

Conferences do not usually occur at every step of a single paper, but over several papers, as various steps surface in conferences and the child discusses different process components. The learning is cumulative and the effect remarkable. Study children who had two years of conferences developed a noticeable responsibility for their writing.

## 4.5 Teachers Should Let Their Writers Write Daily, Sustain Selections Longer, and at Predictable Times.

Children do not rehearse their writing when both time and subject are unpredictable. Observe a child after a holiday, protracted illness, or three-day interruption from school activities, and note the struggle to find a subject or get back on the track. Writing demands a daily, ritualistic set time (always at 9:00 a.m. or 1:00 p.m. etc). There can be no writing program unless time is provided.

When writing is regular and at predictable times, the child controls the subject and can rehearse. He thinks and plans the writing when he is not directly on task. The approach becomes the baseline for children to sustain a piece over a longer period of time. Children who sustain their pieces over several weeks acquire a different understanding of their subject and what it means to know it well. They have had time to read, take notes, listen to their information, and plan changes with other children. Teachers can also scaffold a piece at different points in the writing process.

Completion times are highly variable when writing is sustained at the child's own ability. Some children could handle two days on a piece, while others worked their way up to three weeks of drafts because they were able to maintain a clear understanding of information parts and wholes. In most classrooms, children began their next piece several minutes after finishing another. Learning to use time for planning, rehearsal, discovering new information, or for publishing, was not only a clear indication of child growth, but a strong predictor of the quality of the piece.

## 4.6 Teachers Should Let Children Choose About 80% of Their Topics Because It Assists Them with Voice, Heightens Semantic Domain, Skill of Narrowing Topic, and Basic Decision-Making.

When children choose their topics, several other sub-procces are helped. The child begins the process of revision, "I won't write about this topic, I'll write about that one." They also learn to match their voices and intentions with what appears in the text. If the writing program relies on assigned topics, then children tend to produce voices that sound like their teacher's voice.

Choosing a topic is a learning process. Inexperienced choices are often global, bizarre, or reflect stereotypes of teacher chosen "good subjects". Teachers who provide little time for writing instinctively try to avoid these poor choices by assigning topics. But by making decisions for children they deny voice, intercept revision, and take away ownership (See Appendix 9.8 ).

Children will choose topics more wisely as they develop an understanding of the writing process. They will show a richer semantic domain in both their pieces and their discussion of content and process.

Preliminary data on three case studies over a three-year period suggested a strong relationship between topic choice, writing quality, and the emergence of new writing concepts.

## 4.7 Skills Are Best Taught Within the Context of the Child's Own Writing.

The child can better understand a skill when it is taught within the context of the writing process. He can learn quotation marks in first grade if there is conversation in his piece. As he struggles with clarity, he learns skills are tools to enhance meaning and they become his allies. For this reason, skills should be taught in the midst of the scaffolding process, usually one at a time.

Calkins preliminary data show that children who received punctuation in context used over twice as many punctuation forms in their texts as children who received them in isolated excersises. Children also gave articulate definitions for skills usage by giving examples from their own texts. Although the data refer primarily to punctuation, other skills such as use of leads, following a single subject, verifying experience with specifics etc. followed the same pattern in writing and in descriptions of what the children did when they wrote.

Since the completion of this study, these hypotheses have been shared in many workshops and writing courses around the country. Even though the formal data gathering and work with the Atkinson teachers ended in June 1980, the findings continue to be refined and their validity assessed in classrooms with other children. Far more systematic study is needed on both teachers and children within the same setting to understand the changes of each in relation to the other. Only then will the interaction of child development with environment be started (See Appendix 7.11 ). As in any research study, many more questions have been raised than answers provided.

## DISSEMINATION

Dissemination of information was very much on the minds of the research staff from the beginning. Even though the research had barely begun, preliminary data were shared in order that other professionals could challenge our observations about childrens' composing behaviors. We wanted to be challenged because the right question might save us months of unneeded work. Many comments did come that helped us to see new possibilities in the data.

We also wanted the public to know that the study was concerned with what children did in their daily school labors. We tried, as well, to show the research in the fullest context of child and classroom in order that teachers could transfer information to their own classrooms. Teacher interest through letters, visits to the research site, and in workshops and talks, was immense.

Information about the study has been disseminated in the following ways:

1. Publication of research articles in education journals (See Appendix 7.0).
2. Mailing of packages of the 20 research articles. (See Map I for dissemination pattern).
3. Books to be published:
    - Graves, Donald. Writing: Teachers and Children at Work. (Heinemann: Exeter, NH, London) June 1982.

- Calkins, Lucy. Lessons from a CHild: On the Teaching and Learning of Writing. To be finished March 1982.

- Sowers, Susan. "Writing Development in Context: The Atkinson Study." Chapter in book to be published by Wiley.

4. Books published:

   - Walshe, R.D. Editor. Children Want to Write. (Primary English Teaching Assoc. Australia (See Appendix 11.0)

5. Articles written about the study in newspapers and magazines (See Appendix 11.0)

   - Manchester (NH) Union Leader, December 17, 1978.

   - Rockingham County Gazette - January 3, 1979.

   - Concord Monitor - April 14, 1979.

   - New Hampshire Sunday News - January 13, 1980.

   - Time - May 19, 1980

   - Sydney (Australia) Morning Herald - September 2, 1980.

   - The Age (Australia) September 16, 1980.

   - The English Magazine (London) November 1981.

   - Education News (Australia) No. 8, 1981.

   - Psychology Today - March 1982.

6. Radio

   - Options in Education, National Public Radio Network, Washington, D.C. May 1979.

7. Television

   - "Sunrise Semester," CBS Television Guest Speaker, ETV, New York City.

   - Special on study, New Hampshire Network, PBS, Durham, New Hampshire.

8. Workshops in public and private school systems (List attached).

9. Workshops and seminars in colleges and universities (List attached).

10. Major addresses at regional, national, and international meetings. (List attached).

11. Visits by approximately 1,500 professionals to the Atkinson Academy research site.

12. Other

    - Center for Applied Linguistics, Georgetown University

    - National Assessment for Education Progress, Denver, Colorado.

    - Southwest Regional Lab, Los Angeles, California.

## WORKSHOPS IN THE FOLLOWING SCHOOL SYSTEMS

### USA

**Arizona**
- Tucson

**Connecticut**
- Stamford
- Oxford
- Bridgeport
- Hartford

**Georgia**
- Atlanta

**Maine**
- Boothbay Harbor
- Stonington
- Portland

**Massachusetts**
- Bernardston
- Dartmouth
- Brookline
- Lincoln
- So. Hadley
- Wayland
- Wellesley

**Michigan**
- Flint
- Pontiac

**Minnesota**
- St. Paul

**New Hampshire**
- Amherst
- Derry
- Franklin
- Hampton
- Hillsboro
- Lebanon
- Portsmouth
- Rochester
- Seabrook
- Warner

**New Hampshire**
- Tilton
- Laconia
- Exeter
- Keene
- Manchester
- Meredith
- Concord
- Atkinson
- Nashua
- Pittsford

**New Jersey**
- Montclair

**New York**
- Highland Falls
- Scotia
- Scarsdale
- Buffalo
- Bronx
- Brooklyn
- Guilderland
- Hamburg
- West Point
- New York City
- Woodbury
- Hartsdale
- Monsey
- Rochester
- Little Neck

**Ohio**
- Cincinatti

**Pennsylvania**
- Harrisburg
- Exton
- Malvern
- Philadelphia
- Lancaster

**South Carolina**
- Greenville

**Vermont**
- Barre
- Springfield
- South Londonderry

**Virginia**
- Fairfax
- Alexandria

**West Virginia**
- Decatur

### FOREIGN

**Australia**
- Footscrae, Victoria
- Woolongong, New South Wales
- Newcastle, N.S.W.
- Sydney, N.S.W.
- Adelaide, S.W.
- Melbourne, Victoria

**Canada**
- Toronto
- London
- Windsor
- East York-Scarborough
- Montreal
- Kingston
- York
- Etobicoke

**United Kingdom**
- London
- Edinburgh

## WORKSHOPS IN THE FOLLOWING COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Northeastern University, Boston, MA
Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
University of Vermont, Burlington, VT
State University of New York, Buffalo, NY
George Mason, Virginia
University of California, Berkeley, CA
University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minn.
Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ
Tougaloo College, Jackson, Miss.
University of Arizona, Tucson, AR
New York University, New York, NY
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI
Oakland University, Oakland, MI
Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA
Boston University, Boston, MA
University of Denver, Denver, CO.
Hofstra University, New York
State University of New York, Fredonia, NY
Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY
University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI
University of Virginia, Charlottsville, VI
Pennsylvania State University
University of North Carolina, Charlotte, N.C.
University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH

### FOREIGN

### Australia

Coburg College of Advanced Education, Melbourne, Victoria
Riverina College of Advanced Education, Wagga Wagga, New South Wales
University of South Australia, Adelaide, So. Australia
Sydney University, Sydney, New South Wales

### Canada

University of Ottawa
University of Toronto
University of Western Ontario, London
McGill, Montreal
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Toronto

### United Kingdom

London Institute for Education, London
University of Edinburgh, Scotland

United Kingdom (cont.)

Bretton Hall, Wakefield, No, York, Ontario, Canada
Roehampton Institute, London, England

## REGIONAL AND NATIONAL CONFERENCES

National Council of Teachers of English national meetings at New York City, San Francisco, Cincinatti, Boston, and Hartford.

International Reading Association national meetings at Atlanta, Houston, and St. Louis.

New York State Department of Education Convention on Writing, Albany, NY, keynote address.

Education Records Bureau, national meeting, New York City, keynote address.

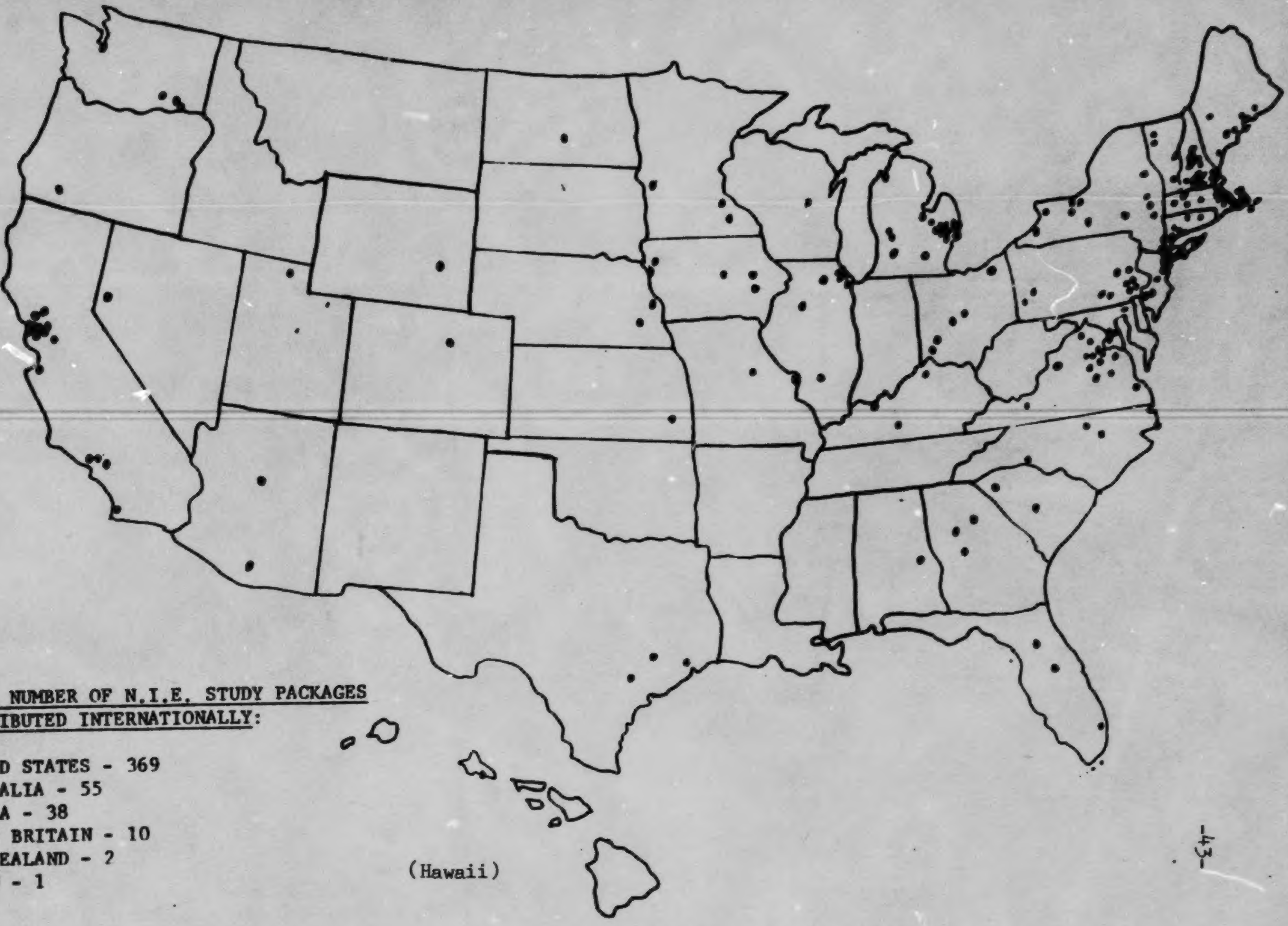
New England Child Language Association

Westchester County Regional Teachers Convention, Westchester Co. Pennsylvania.

Center for Expansion of Language and Thinking, Tucson, Arizona, annual meeting keynote address.

University of Virginia, regional conference, Charlotteville, Virginia.

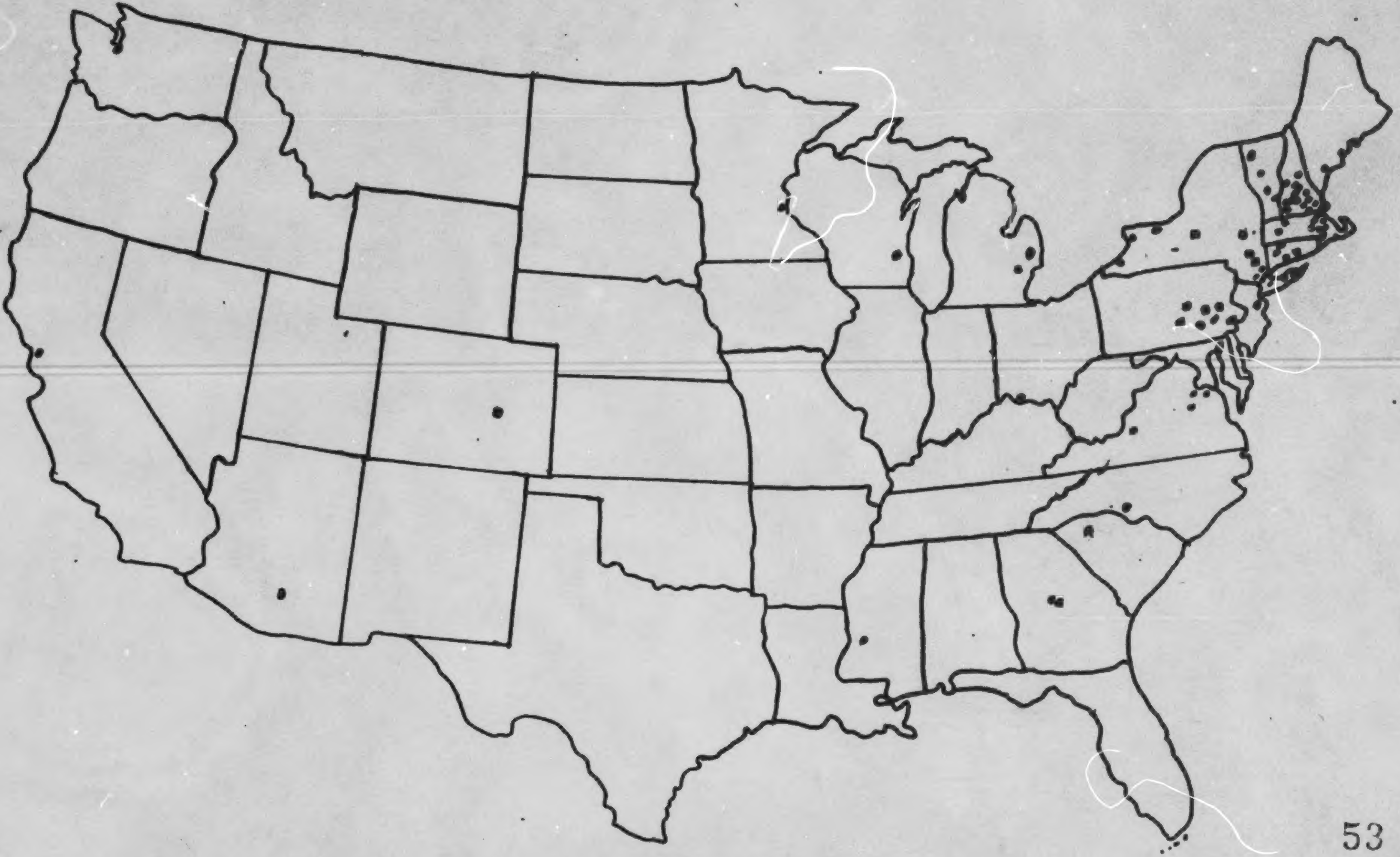
International Conference on English, Sydney, Australia.



**TOTAL NUMBER OF N.I.E. STUDY PACKAGES DISTRIBUTED INTERNATIONALLY:**

UNITED STATES - 369
AUSTRALIA - 55
CANADA - 38
GREAT BRITAIN - 10
NEW ZEALAND - 2
JAPAN - 1

MAP I: DISTRIBUTION OF PACKAGES OF N.I.E. ARTICLES



MAP II: DISTRIBUTION OF WRITING PROCESS WORKSHOPS
MADE POSSIBLE BY NIE GRANT

## ANNOTATED CONTENTS OF THE APPENDIX

### PART I - RESEARCH ARTICLES

| | Page in Appendix |
|---|---|
| Graves, Donald H. "Research Doesn't Have to be Boring," Language Arts, (Jan. 1979) pp. 76-80. First piece written to introduce seven subsequent columns on the study to teachers. The study design and variables to be examined are discussed. | 56 |
| Graves, Donald H. "What Children Show Us About Revision," Language Arts, (March 1979) pp. 312-319. First articles on revision giving preliminary data on six and eight year old practices in revision. Revision was already becoming one of the most important foci in the study as it showed, from the start, what children perceived in the writing process. | 61 |
| Calkins, Lucy M. "Andrea Learns to Make Writing Hard," Language Arts (May 1979) pp. 569-576. Presents a case study of how one child changes her approaches to revision during the first year of the study. | 69 |
| Sowers, Susan. "A Six Year-Old's Writing Process. The First Half of First Grade," Language Arts, (October 1979) pp. 829-35. Sarah, one of the cases in Grade One, has her changing writing processes described during rehearsing, composing, and adjusting her test. | 77 |
| Graves, Donald H. "Let Children Show Us How to Help Them Write," Visible Language (March 1979) pp. 16-28. This article describes how children give us clues in their handwriting about their understnading of the writing process. The child's use of the page, prosodics, and the breaking of handwriting conventions all show various aspects of the writer's development. | 84 |
| Calkins, Lucy M. "Children Learn the Writer's Craft," Language Arts (February 1980) pp. 207-13. Shows how children move from play to craft in the writing process. | 97 |

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Calkins, Lucy M. "When Children Want to Punctuate: Basic Skills Belong in Context," Language Arts (May 1980) pp. 567-73. This article shows children's concepts of punctuation when it is taught from a meaning base within the writing process. Contrast is given to a room where punctuation is taught in isolation of writing itself. 104

Kamler, Barbara. "One Child, One Teacher, One Classroom: The Story of One Piece of Writing," Language Arts ( September 1980) pp. 680-93. All of the variables connected with the development of one piece of writing by a seven year old child over three seeks time are recorded. Influences of other children, the teacher, on the child's revisions are reported. 111

Graves, Donald H. and Murray, Donald M. "Revision: In the Writer's Workshop and in the Classroom," Boston University Journal of Education (Spring 1980) pp.39-56. Comparisions are made between the writing process of a professional writer and those of six to ten year old children in the NIE study. 125

Graves, Donald H. "A New Look at Writing Research," Language Arts (Nov./Dec. 1980) pp. 913-19. In light of what has been discovered thus far in the NIE - New Hampshire Study, an evaluation is given of 25 years of research in writing in the elementary years, reviewing changing methods, topics evaluated, and the need for studies that consider the context in whcih they are conducted. 144

Graves, Donald H. "Writing Research for the Eighties: What is Needed," Language Arts (February 1981) pp. 197-206. Specific research studies (again in light of the NIE - New Hampshire study) are suggested in three areas: the writing process, background information about other processes to understanding writing, and the ethnographic context of children's composing. Some suggestions are given for research designs. 151

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Graves, Donald H. "Where Have All the Teachers Gone?" Language Arts (April 1981) pp. 492-96. A plea is given for teachers to become involved in research for themselves or at least in collaboration with NIE studies. Examples of how a teacher in the Atkinson study conducted her own research (See Appendix 9.5 ) and how other teachers published their findings (See Appendixes 9.9 and 9.10) are also provided. 161

Calkins, Lucy M. "Children's Rewriting Strategies," Research in the Teaching of English (December 1980) pp. 331-41. Through interviews, observation, and examination of children's products, Calkins defines four kinds of revisers in young children. 166

Graves, Donald H. "Patterns of Child Control of the Writing Process," in Children Want to Write: Donald Graves in Australia, Primary English Teaching Association, Australia (March 1981). An overview of the Atkinson study with more information on the transitions children make from oral to written discourses and on children's revisions. As address given to the Third International Conference on the Teaching of English, Sydney, Australia. 177

Sowers, Susan. "Young Writers' Preference for Non-narrative Modes of Composition," (To be published in Research in the Teaching of English). Shows how children change from non-narrative to narrative writing during the first year of school. A number of pre-narrative forms are discussed. 189

Rule, Rebecca. "The Spelling Process: A Look at Strategies," (To be published in Language Arts, Spring 1982). Rule takes an older writer with spelling problems and shows how spelling changes from draft to draft. 207

Graves, Donald H. "The Growth and Development of First Grade Writers," (To be published in a collection of writings from the Canadian Council of Teachers of English Annual Meeting, Ottawa, May 1979 by Longmans in 1982). Written early in the study, 3/4 of the way 219

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through the first year, composite developmental profiles are given of three six year old writers at low, middle, and high levels. 219

Calkins, Lucy M. "Case Study of a Nine Year Old Writer," unpublished paper on a detailed study of Andrea at the end of the first year. Calkins reviews research procedures, Andrea's change in revision, search for a lead sentence, use of symbols to manipulate material, changes in chronology and uses of information, and then the disappearance of external strategies viewed by the researcher. 239

## PART II - BOOK CHAPTERS

Part II of the Appendix contains chapters from a book I am writing for Heinemann entitled, Writing: Teachers and Children at Work. Most of the data base for these chapters, with some other material added, is from the NIE-New Hampshire study. The book, written for elementary school teachers, has two parts. The first part is on how children develop as writers, with the second part on how teachers help children develop. The second half of the book, Chapters 13 through 29, is completed. Four chapters remain to be written in the first part.

Chapter II - "The Writing Process" - Shows elements of the writing process that must be controlled in order to write. Children and older writers are shown learning to control topic choice, rehearsal, composing, reading and revision. 263

Chapter III - "How Do Writers Develop?" - Writers grow when they lose their balance and regain it again in the midst of solving problems in the writing process. A close look at the basic growth unit, problem solving. 278

Chapter IV - "On Buying Glasses for a Wolf" - The voice-ego plunges ahead like a hungry wolf, yet needs vision to back off, view the writing problem, and change direction. Decentering and centration, along with forces of self-centeredness are shown in writers of different ages. 290

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Chapter V - "Making Development Visible" - Writers grow in three principal time-space dimensions: the use of the page, the process and information. Viewing writers along these dimensions is one of the most fruitful ways of charting child growth. 300

Chapter VI - "When Writers Speak" - How writers make the transition from speaking to writing is shown through four cases ages six, ten, eleven, and adult. 313

Chapter VII - "Handwriting is for Writing" - Four phases in using handwriting within the context of composing are discussed: "Get it Down Phase", "First Aesthetics", Growing Age of Convention," "Breaking Conventions," Later Aesthetics". Handwriting speed and handwriting disability are also discussed. 326

Chapter X - "Revision" - Shows relation of perception to revision. Children change what they see. Just how perceptions about the writing process change is described through three areas. 341

## PART III- ARTICLES RELATED TO THE STUDY

Articles in Part III are not attempting to report research. On the other hand, most of the articles contain recommendations for classroom practice based on the study.

Sowers, Susan. "The Researcher Who Watches Children Write," in Children Want to Write (Sydney, Primary English Association) 1981, pp. 29-35. This article shows how data were gathered during the NIE study. This is a non-technical, human-interest type approach to showing how Graves and others gathered data at Atkinson. 357

Calkins, Lucy M. "The Craft of Writing." Teacher (Nov./Dec. 1980) pp. 41-44. Shows a class engaged in the writing process. Specific suggestions made to teachers about how to help children take ownership of their pieces, with special focus on learning how to revise. 364

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Calkins, Lucy M. "Punctuate? Puntuate. Punctuate!" Learning (February 1980) pp. 86-88. A first cousin of Calkins' other articles in research section on punctuation. This piece gives more specific recommendations for what teachers ought to do to help children within the context of their own composing. 368

Calkins, Lucy M. "One School's Writing Program." National Elementary Principal Vol 59, No.2 (June 1980) pp. 34-38. Calkins describes the overall writing program at Atkinson Academy, the building in which the NIE study was conducted. Examples of the teaching of writing from grade one through five are given with further specifics of child and teacher cases. Recommendations for teaching, based on the NIE data are given. 371

Giacobbe, Mary Ellen. "Kids Can Write the First Week of School." Learning (September 1981) pp. 131-132. Giacobbe, first grade teacher in the study, describes her approach to helping children write their first week of school. Giacobbe also shares a spelling assessment given to the children to help her understand their abilities. This article has been reprinted by the New Zealand Council of Teachers, as well as the Primary English Teaching Association in Australia. 377

Sowers, Susan. "Kds Cn Rit." Learning (October 1980) pp. 14-15. Sowers shows how teachers, in particular, Giacobbe, works with young children's invented spelling to help them become better writers. Background to work in invented spelling from Chomsky, Bissex, and Montesorri is given. 379

Egan, Judith. "After All, They Have Writing in Common." To be published by University of North Dakota. Egan, second grade teacher in the study, describes how she integrates literature into her writing program. Because children write, they see common elements between their writing and the writing of professionals. Their critical levels of reading the work of others is raised. 381

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Graves, Donald H. "Break the Welfare Cycle: Let Writers Choose Their Topics." To be published in fforum, University of Michigan, Winter, 1982. Students dependency on teacher topics are described, with recommendations from NIE data given on ways to help students take more responsibility for their writing. 388

Graves, Donald H. and Giacobbe, Mary Ellen. "Questions for Teachers Who Wonder if Their Writers Change." To bepublished in Language Arts (May 1982). An article not connected directly with the study but based on questions raised by the study at Atkinson. Study was done as a follow-up to the first, under Lucy Calkins grant from NCTE. Giacobbe was a teacher involved in the NIE study. 395

Caroselli, Marion. "Romance Precedes Precision: Recommended Classroom Teaching Practices." in Perspectives on Writing in Grades 1-8 pp. 60-67. In this chapter on recommended teaching practices, four of the Atkinson teachers practices in the teaching of writing have been chosen for publication in this NCTE book on the teaching of writing in the U.S. Brackets are placed around the material written by the Atkinson teachers. 415

## PART IV - DATA EXAMPLES

Materials in this section are included to show different protocols, approaches to portraying data, and definitions of some of the data sectors.

Spelling evolutions:
Susan Sowers built a spelling lexicon showing the evolution of each of the words during the children's first year in school. Two pages from her records shown here on the two children, Toni and Sarah. 419

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Concept descriptions:
Rebecca Rule's definitions of the concepts used in this study. These are the final definitions used in the inter-rater reliability checks. 421

Computer Printouts of Child Language
All of the children's utterances during writing, conferences with teachers or responding to researcher questions were classified by concept and date and placed on the computer. Codes in brackets indicate the concept embedded in a question or statement from the other party. For example, on the first printout (700002) Greg was asked a question with process-standard embedded in the request. The 700002 code refers to the notebook containing the full context of the utterance. Other codes represented here are defined in the concept definition section of this Appendix. 427

Sound-grapheme relationship in composing:
Samples are shown of protocols used in showing the relationship between recordings of child sound and placing letters on the page. Two different types of children are shown. 431

Writer variability:
All writing by two writers over a two year period was independently rated for quality. A graph was then constructed to show the relationship between time and quality within the same writer. The writer is only being compared *with himself*. 434

Susie: Was already a top writer when the study started. She peaks in December of each year, and has a slump in January, with a climb at the end of the year that never reaches the December peak. There is only a slight advance in relation to self over the two years.

Birger: Has practically no plateaus in his writing. There are no high or low troughs, yet he continues to climb and greatly improve his writing over the two year period.

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The weakness of the graphs is that they do not show us how much better the top is than the bottom. The graph accentuates differences between high and low because of the ranking appraoch. The next review will be through independent quality ratings.

**Evaluation Scale:**
The scale used to evaluate the writing of Susie and Birger over the two year period is attached. Three basic factors, the writers use of information, organization and language toward meaning along high, middle and low levels, were assessed. 436

**Observation protocol:**
A large amount of observation, independent of the video tapes, was done through direction observations. This type of observation was used for children in grades one and two, with some use when children first entered grade three. After that children made large reorganizations, line-outs, writings in margins and extensive sophisticated conferences which could not be done in this manner. As the child wrote the observer sat next to him putting down words or letters as they seemed to fall into operations, putting wach operation over a number in the left column. When a behavior was observed, a number, corresponding to the operation in the left column was recorded in the right and the behavior noted. The center column was used to place symbols classifying the behavior for later charting. 437

**Observation classification protocol:**
One way of portraying the recurring process of behavior is shown for this six year old child. Note how the child moves between rereading, changing, composing aloud, writing and drawing, from step 1 through step 78 on December 14th. 440

**Classification of revisions:**
When older writers get into extensive revisions, the important thing is to note how drafts evolve and the behaviors that go with those revisions. Attached is the story of one paper from first to last draft. 441

## PART V - DISSEMINATION

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| **Manchester Union Leader** | |
| "How Kids Learn to Write." December 17, 1978. Early coverage of the study in state newspaper. | 450 |
| **The Rockingham Gazette** | |
| "Atkinson Students Teach University of New Hampshire Professors." January 3, 1979. Early coverage in county newspaper. | 451 |
| **Concord Monitor** | |
| "Childrens' Writing: A Need to Say 'I Am'." April 14, 1979. Coverage of the Atkinson study in state newspaper. | 454 |
| **New Hampshire Sunday News** | |
| "Two Year Study Focuses on How Children Write." January 13, 1980. Coverage in statewide paper. | 457 |
| **Time** | |
| "The Righting of Writing." May 19, 1980. A review of status of writing in the U.S. with the Atkinson study in the lead. | 458 |
| **The Sydney (Australia) Morning Herald** | |
| "Easing the Pain of Writing." September 2, 1980. Interview and coverage of speech given to the Primary English Teachers Association of Australia. The paper covers New South Wales. | 462 |
| **The Age** | |
| "Children 'Turned off' Writing." September 16, 1980. Article from interview with reporter on work and teaching in Melbourne area. Paper covers state of Victoria. | 463 |

### Children Want to Write

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April 1981. Attached is table of contents from the book on Donald Graves' visit to Australia in 1980. The book is about the NIE study along with reprints from the study. 464

### The English Magazine

"Renter and Owners:Donald Graves on Writing." November 1981. An interview with Donald Graves on the study in the national journal on teaching English in the United Kingdom. 465

### Education News

"Donald Graves - The Professional Nudist." No. 8, 1981. Article written on the study for the national education publication in Australia. 469

### Psychology Today

"Writing Readiness." March 1982. Article written on the NIE study with emphasis on grade one, revision, and the background of Donald Graves. 473

# RESEARCH UPDATE

## Research Doesn't Have to Be Boring

**Donald H. Graves**
*for the Committee on Research National Council of Teachers of English*

"How can you stand to do research?" The way the question leaped at me in the teacher's room, you could tell it had been brewing for some time. "I mean, isn't it boring?" she continued. "All those piles of stuff, columns of figures, and charts. It would wear me out. Besides, who will read about it after it's all done?"

Others joined in. Their tone suggested research is dry in texture, smells of musty bookcases and crusty language. The concerned tipped their heads in pity.

Research doesn't have to be that way. Researchers willing to be close to children, especially through case-study and direct observation, are continually rewarded by the children themselves. As Cheryl picks up a pen to experiment with her limited knowledge of ten letters, the researcher suspects new ground will be broken.

From the oval of thrust lips and tapping tongue a series of "t's" tumbles into the air as the pen in Cheryl's hand seeks to follow on paper what tongue and teeth know together. The step is so crude and repetitive, the researcher can almost see the nerve impulses as they journey back and forth between confident mouth and hesitant hand. The researcher records the information.

The details of new steps like Cheryl's need to be shared more often. We need the data as well as the drama of their emergence. For this reason "Research Update" will cover the story of a single research project on the writing process during this and subsequent issues. The study, funded by the National Institute of Education for two years, is one we will conduct and report ourselves. Why tell such a story? Isn't research usually reported after it is completed? True, but why not tell a story as it unfolds, and tell it from the inside? In this way readers will be acquainted with study problems and decisions as well as specific changes in children.

## The Study

We want to know how children change when they write. For two years a research team will observe children in classrooms and describe how they change in the writing process. The study will follow eight children from grade one through grade two, and eight children from grade three through grade four in five different classrooms. Since the case study method will be used, readers can expect detailed observations when children write, play, or compose in any area that might affect what a child does in the writing process. Thirty-three questions make up the core of study inquiry. We will note how children change in the following areas:

1) *Composing:* Concept of composing, composing in several media forms, proofreading, precomposing activity, use of overt language while composing, reading habits, use of resources, themes in unassigned writing, use of territory in content areas, semantic and syntactic issues, use of logic, use of adverbs, verbs and verb tense.
2) *Spelling:* Approach to invented spelling, use of resources for spelling, concept of spelling, child's reading in relation to words used in writing, description of how he/she spells.
3) *Handwriting:* Use of thumb and forefinger, writing continuity, elbow position and motion, strength, use of space on paper, directional language, use of writing instruments, composing surfaces, imitation of set forms, concept of handwriting.

## What Problems Does the Study Address?

Time with children is essential to good teaching. Yet teachers are aware that contact time with children has eroded over the last twenty years. Nowhere is contact time, particularly of the one-to-one variety, more important than in the teaching of writing through conferences.

A teacher who conducts a writing conference with each second grade child in a class of thirty cannot afford to misuse the time. Teaching needs to include observations based on a knowledge of the process of writing and how young writers develop.

This study will provide information for teachers that shows where children are—to make conference time count. Data from two other studies (Graves 1973, 1976) have already shown the value of information that sketches in the developmental sequences of young writers. For example, a review of seven-year-old's proofreading habits shows children moving farther afield than the immediate word as they grow older. At first children proofread at the word unit level. That is, the word the child composes at the moment might be changed three to four times. There is no evidence of proofreading other words within the phrase. In short, proofreading moves back in space and time from the composing of the immediate word. Until the child goes back to proofread from the beginning of the selection, redrafting seldom appears in the child's conception of the writing process. For this reason, development along space-time roots is one of the richest sources of information in writing process research.

Most curricular materials stress grade level skills in the language arts. "In the second grade children will be taught capitalization, the period and the question mark, and in the fifth, how to combine sentences." Grade level skills ignore orders of development. Some second grade children are capable of combining sentences whereas some fifth grade children are struggling with sentence markers. Children give us information in the ways they write, solve problems, and conceive of the writing process. This information falls in an order that tells us where and how to teach.

This study will provide information for teachers to "read out" from child behaviors to teaching action, rather than infusing methods into the teaching of writing whether the child is ready or not. We speak of letting the child lead for effective learning to take place, but data are not available to help teachers read the meaning of the child's responses.

## What New Information Will Be Uncovered?

Although there is preliminary information on developmental sequences, wide gaps exist. Two years of observation will do much to fill in these gaps. In some instances, study questions will be found to be invalid and therefore removed from consideration. The more important components of the study will be developmentally consistent from child to child. As in Piaget's studies of logical development in the child, the emergence of behaviors can be sequenced in such a way that next stages can be predicted across children.

New areas of study will be identified. Although the answers to thirty-three major questions will be sought in this study, one of the purposes of case study investigation is the discovery of new questions we don't even know exist. In two previous case study investigations I have found that about sixty percent of the work involved following new leads. Since this study will cover two years of observation, the percentage may be even higher.

New relationships among language arts components will be established. For example, when a child changes the position of his paper, or increases in her knowledge of sound-symbol relationships, some effects may be seen in writing speed, ideas, or spelling accuracy. When a change occurs in any one of the thirty-three question areas, we will be observing effects in the other thirty-two.

## How Are the Children Chosen?

It took three weeks to choose the sixteen children. This is because the choice of children for case study work is the opposite of a random sampling. Children are chosen with specific intervals of development in mind. The children will range from those who can barely hold a writing instrument to those who are able to revise their drafts.

Last September children in specific writing categories were observed. This insured that there will be good intervals between children in the study. The intervals are necessary since the study is a mapping operation in which sequences of growth are charted within and across the children. For example, one factor observed was the children's concept of what good writers need to know. Their responses fell at different points on the following continuum (from A, the most elemental concept, to D, the most developed):

A. Stresses motor and space factors. ("Ya gotta write on the line.")
B. Stresses combination of motor and spelling factors.
C. Stresses title, mechanics, and organization.
D. Stresses rewriting, character development, self-criticism, some uses of mechanics.

The children selected for the study represent most of the above levels. Other factors observed were: actual writing practice, motor control and spelling.

### How Will the Information Be Gathered?

Information is gathered on the entire writing process. Therefore, children are observed before, during and after they write. This is done because writing is viewed as more than just the mere writing down of words at one point in time, and more than an examination of the child's product. Rather, writing process research views process as beginning with a child's first finding a topic. The research may follow a child's rehearsal of the topic through drawing, the many problems solved while composing, to the child's examination of the product after writing. Finally, additional information is gathered through child interviews and the analysis of their products.

Each day two full-time observers will be in class with the sixteen children during the entire two years of the study. Since most information is gathered only when children choose to enter the writing process, many extra hours are spent observing children doing other things. For example, information is gathered when children design structures, draw, or paint, since all involve composing and problem solving. When a child edits content in a drawing it is often a preamble to editing in writing. The general concept of editing has been established.

Information is gathered through hand and video recording of child activity in the classroom. Hand recording is done when the observer notes the child is ready to compose. The researcher then moves to where the child is ready to work. As the child draws or writes, the researcher records the order of activity, types of problems solved and the statements the child makes in relation to the work. Video recordings are made through a special station in the child's classroom. These recordings are made when children choose to work at a table on which a video camera records all sound and activity. This station gives such information as semantic and syntactic decisions, rewriting, motor speed, soundings for invented spelling, language decisions, and sound effects.

Other information is gathered through interviews with the child, teachers and parents. Writing folder interviews, conducted bi-weekly, are used to find the child's views of best papers, reasons for choices, and concepts of good writing. These approaches help us to understand the child's growing concept of what is included in the writing process.

Children's papers are also analyzed. These analyses show how children change in their use of person, territory of topic, syntax, semantics, revision, spelling and motor control.

### What Have We Done Thus Far?

Formal work with children began in September 1978. This was preceded by an entire year's preparation. In the fall of 1977 a proposal for research was submitted to the National Institute of Education. Acknowledgement of funding came in Spring 1978. At this point another important phase of work began.

The choice of a study site had to be

made. Interviews with principals, teachers and other educators, as well as on-site visits, were made in five different communities. Since this is a study of children and their development, socioeconomic factors were not major criteria in making the community choice. Choice of the school was based on:

1) *School Principal:* Length of time in community, knowledge of curriculum, child growth and development, ability to work with staff and community.
2) *Teachers:* Provision of writing opportunities for children, breadth of expression in many media forms, general provision for good learning.
3) *Receptivity to the Study:* After the proposal was explained, how receptive was the staff and administration to being involved?

Even when the school site in a small New England community was chosen, many more meetings were held to discuss details of teacher concerns and the nature of researcher involvement in their classrooms. When researchers are on-site in a classroom for as many as 400 hours in a year's time, teachers need to know their intentions.

Other preparations include budget negotiations, staff hiring (there are four full-time persons working on the project), ordering of equipment, travel, and data processing arrangements.

By the end of September teachers and children had been chosen. During this period a "getting acquainted" phase was begun which really never ends. Teachers wonder what researchers think of their teaching. The host wants to know what the guest thinks of the home. If the researchers share information about children, consult with teachers and respond to teacher concerns on a regular basis, a needed team is built—researcher and teacher. Without this team the research flounders.

Children need to know what researchers do. They are direct with their inquiries. When a researcher starts to record they often say, "What are you doing that for?" I usually show them my notes and state, "You are doing many interesting things and I write them down here." Once children know what an observer is doing, it is a rare child who does not like to be observed.

All parents of the sixteen children chosen for case study are visited in their homes. The study is explained, parent questions answered, and permission is requested for child participation. These meetings stress:

1) Parents may remove their children from the study at any time.
2) Not to discuss involvement in the study with their child.
3) The need for parent help in explaining children's writing backgrounds and other insights about the child's development.
4) Questions about study content will be shared with the parent.

## The Future

Future columns will report changes in the children and the study itself. Sequences in the development of children's writing, stories of change in individual children, new research procedures, and the interrelationships of study components will be shared.

Stories of children and how they change help both other children and teachers. And the research isn't boring, simply because children are not boring.

# RESEARCH UPDATE

## What Children Show Us about Revision

**Donald H. Graves**
*For the Committee on Research
National Council of Teachers
of English*

Sarah stops, and with furrowed brow, looks again at the word, *jul (jewel)* she has just written, erases it, and over the same thin, blackened spot of lined newsprint paper she sounds and rewrites, *juwul*. Sarah sensed that something was missing when she first wrote. Sounding it through again confirmed that a *w* was needed. Six-year-old Sarah has been writing for a week; this is her first act of revision.

"Oops. I goofed. I don't want that." says Brian. Brian, an eight year old, writes a story about a rescue. He erases *came to* and writes in *reached* for the sentence, "Jay's father *reached* out to save me and pulled me up." The meaning didn't fit; a new word was needed. Most of the changes Brian makes are still in the spelling adjustment category and are made when he first composes. He has just begun to change words because he wants more precise meaning.

Eight-year-old Andrea drafts and redrafts. First drafts are easily identified in her writing folder because the writing is large and hastily written. Jagged lines are through whole sentences and parts of others, later to be recombined into new organizations in the second draft. Arrows are drawn from the bottom of the page to the top. New words are written in, others crossed out. There are no erasures. Andrea knows that drafts are temporary and lead only to more drafts.

Sarah, Brian and Andrea are three of sixteen children involved in an NIE funded study to document how—and in what order—primary children change composing, spelling, and motor behaviors *during* the writing process. This research, done in an elementary school in New Hampshire, will identify, describe, and sequence the order in which behaviors related to the writing process emerge over a two year period. This is the second (see *Language Arts*, January 1979) in a series of articles reporting data as they unfold in the study. This column is devoted to early data and speculation on revision, as well as the implications of these data for the teaching of writing.

When Sarah, Brian and Andrea revise they show us what is important to them in the writing process. Sarah may be changing her paper because her teacher feels spelling is important. Nevertheless, it is at least a demonstration of what standard Sarah has adopted at the moment. Brian's change of *reached* for *came to* is concrete evidence of an intelligent unrest with words and ideas. When Andrea draws arrows and crosses out words after stating, "How am I going to change this?", there is visible evidence of what problems confront her and how she solves them.

In this study, revision refers to the act of changing something already composed. It may be as simple as adjusting the shape of the letters written seconds before or as complex as removing a second paragraph of an article and rewriting a fifth to move up to replace the second.

**Sarah**

Six-year-old Sarah revised before she began to write. Sarah adjusted blocks in her make-believe house to fit the need for an enlarged bedroom. Wings were sketched in on birds drawn the day before. Yarn was pulled out of a burlap pattern to start again because it did not follow the path she wanted. The tool of revision was part of her learning style; it merely continued when she began to write.

Although Sarah is just beginning to write, within two weeks she demonstrates behaviors that will serve her well in future writing. She rereads, adds words, proofreads earlier in her selection—all traits or tools that will be useful later on. They are traits that account for her rapid advancement as a writer. Sarah experiments, regresses, experiments, yet moves in the upward spiral where her script gains precision, and words more closely resemble exact spellings.

Unlike most beginning writers, Sarah did not rehearse through drawing or other practice constructions. Rather, she wrote in an impressionistic style, putting down spelling inventions and "feels" of messages. If Sarah was asked, "What will you write next?", she responded, "I don't know." Early in November Sarah wrote:

I waƨ love Able ANd I waƨ nieƐ I loved
her ƨhe wƨaƸ neiƨ I loved her

When Sarah added fourteen words to another story after she had finished writing, the words were feeling-type words, *I love you, beautiful, pretty, nice*. Other children frequently said to Sarah, "We don't get this." Sarah merely shrugged her shoulders and said, "That's the way I do it."

On November 30th Sarah showed signs of changing. For the first time Sarah shared an advanced impression of what would be in her writing. She stated, "And on this page I will say, and this one . . ." The new step, however, affected Sarah's writing when she wrote:

| | |
|---|---|
| Woody is cot. | (Woody is cute.) |
| He tok a wrom. | (He took a worm.) |
| Woody did. | (Woody died.) |
| Woody wak. | (Woody wake.) |
| Woody good. | (Woody good.) |
| Woody neis. | (Woody nice.) |

Unlike other writing episodes Sarah could not sit still during the composing of this simple message. For each two- to four-word sentence, she left her seat at least twice to visit other parts of the room. The message is unusual for Sarah because for the first time it has space-time boundaries and follows a pre-stated sequence. Whereas feeling sentences in other writing were dashed down in six to seven word units at six per minute, now the units are shorter and at three words per minute. Sarah did not do *any revision* during this new approach to writing. Getting the message down was enough; such behavior as rereading, proofing or revising were not present.

The next day, December 1st, Sarah's message had more coherence, and followed a more typical story line. She did not move about or display the tension behaviors of the day before. Sarah wrote:

Ragebee Ann Ragedee Anndy

| | |
|---|---|
| Oenc a poen a tame | Once upon a time |
| Tare was soem dolls | There was some dolls |
| Taer naems aer Ann and Anndy | Their names are Ann and Andy |
| The valin is faetig on Ann from hrteg cuz Ann is a gral | The villain is fighting on Ann from hunting because Ann is a girl |
| Ha ha ha ha Ann is cot she is said Anndy | "Ha, ha, ha Ann is cute." "She is." said Andy |
| Taea aer good said the valin | "They are good." said the villain |

Several changes are noted from the day before: sentences are more developed. *Once upon a time* makes its appearance, rereadings and revisions increase, and the logical construction *because* is introduced. The use of the word *because*, an attempt to explain central action, leads to a sentence with the "sound" of logic but a confused meaning.

Other children liked the story but could not understand her sentence, "The villain is fighting on Ann from hunting because Ann is a girl." And Sarah could not respond to their queries. Again, the new step will not be revised in this stage of Sarah's development.

Most revision is at the word unit level, and involves the adjustments of spellings. Words go through stages of development along with the child. The stage of development for each, the child and the word, determine if there will be a revision. For Sarah and other children who invent spellings, words are written and revised in the following categories:

1. *Sight words:* These words have reached the stage of final, correct spelling. For Sarah such words as *good, she, is, said* and *from* are in this category. The words are known, stable and will be revised if she spots an error in them.
2. *Stable inventions:* These words are spelled the same way each time even though they are inventions. Such words are *Valin - villain, neis - nice.* Since these words have reached a point of stability, differences in these words will be noted and revised.
3. *Words in transition:* These words are invented, have appeared only several times in the child's writing. When these words appear, the child sounds them through as they are written. An example of this type of word for Sarah is *wuz, wsas* in her earlier writing. The word is now in the sight category. Words in this category are not revised as often as sight words and stable inventions since they are unstable
4. *First inventions:* These are new words invented for the first time as in *botafll prnssas - beautiful princess.* Of all words spelled, these are the least likely to be revised. If these words are revised at all it is during the composing of the word itself

In summary, Sarah's revision patterns are shaped by a variety of circumstances. Word stability, the newness of a procedure, audience response, the purpose of the writing, are all factors affecting Sarah's revising habits. it is the intent of this study to observe these same factors in the writing processes of the other sixteen children.

**Brian**

From September through November eight-year-old Brian wrote easily. He composed at an average speed of five words per minute. Misspelled words produced a mild dissatisfaction. Like many other children his age, the major motor and spelling problems were overcome in the first two grades.

Most of Brian's writing was fiction—racing cars, a circus, a rescue. Two were stories about his father and grandfather. All five, however, followed a retelling of a story already rehearsed by Brian when he told it to family members or classmates. For this reason, Brian had a strong, advanced concept of what happened next. Such queries as, "Tell me what will happen next." or "What will this be about?" brought two to three paragraph responses. When Brian wrote, he seemed to fill in the blanks of his advance story concept. The actual writing followed pre-stated paragraphs closely. If Brian did revise, it involved spelling adjustments when he first composed the word.

During the last week of November, Brian changed the way he wrote and revised. Brian's teacher was responsible for the change. Noting Brian's level of fluency, yet lack of revision, she stressed two new approaches to the writing process. One required Brian to write about a personal experience, the other to write three leads before beginning to write the main paper.

Brian's teacher believed that revision is easiest when it relates to writing about personal experience. It is easier to confirm the truth of personal experience than the stories of fantasies. "That was the way I felt; no, I didn't feel that way; it must have been this way."

Brian's teacher aided the concept of revision at two different points in the prewriting. Brian wrestled through a listing of four different experiences before deciding on the one he wished to write about. The inclusion and exclusion of topics is a process of revision. "This is suitable; that is not suitable."

Three leads were written to start his personal account of losing his breath in the second grade. Brian wrote:

> I have a problem with my ribs. If I get hurt bad on my left side I can't breathe!
>
> Once when I was in second grade, I was on the seesaw and I fell off! I can't breathe!
>
> I couldn't talk! I was trying to say I can't breathe!

Unlike other children who had not grasped the concept of multiple starts, Brian's second and third leads were not the second and third sentences of a three sentence story. Each lead was a partial revision of the other. Each had the phrase, "I can't breathe," with different beginnings. With each draft the language became more direct until Brian simply wrote, "I couldn't talk!"

A week later Brian wrote three leads for another personal experience. In the midst of the second lead, he said, "Oh, no, this isn't what I want." smiled, and crossed out the unwanted phrase. Up to this time Brian erased all errors.

Once crossing out enters the picture for Brian or other children, the units of revision expand. To erase an entire line or even a phrase is a large task and usually quite messy. The draft now takes on an important, temporary quality. Words can be written in; others excluded. The section may be written from three to four times before the words are true to the meaning of the personal experience. Furthermore, the child realizes print is not indelible, does not have to be correct the first time, is a means toward a more permanent end.

Once children like Brian feel control of the writing process from the choice of the topic, selecting the best lead to the clarification of experience through several drafts, a Copernican revolution has taken place. The center of control is more in the child's hands than the teacher's. Output doubles, revision increases ten-fold, sentences are crossed out, paragraphs rearranged. Word unit revision is practiced only as a touch-up process in the final draft.

In this case study of children's writing it is sometimes difficult to know where development ends and instruction begins. The dilemma is not unlike the heredity-environment issue. Environment activates the genetic potential, just as the teaching environment interacts with the child to activate development. We still maintain our belief that a teacher cannot draw upon non-existent schemas but can lead the child to juxtapose already existing schemas to produce a third. A child with an experience, the words to recall it, and the reading power to disengage from his own written text, can be led to revise.

**Andrea**

In September eight-year-old Andrea wrote at a speed of 15.5 words per minute, an unusually high speed for children her age. The handwriting was legible with most words spelled correctly, the familiar plateau reached by Brian and children who have mastered the motor and sound-symbol components of writing. The stage is not unlike that reached by readers who are proficient decoders yet who need to use reading as a tool for personal development.

Andrea wrote as many as 500 words in a sitting but did not revise. In September she did minor revising through the "proofing" of words as she wrote. She revised as she wrote since only one writing draft was involved. The revisions were low level—change in letter shapes, a missing vowel to make a correct spelling.

Andrea's first content revision came on October 2nd when reading for spelling errors in her selection. She noticed a problem in the logical outcome of an incident. She reached for her pen but hesitated, not knowing how to adjust the problem.

Andrea's dilemma of how to revise once she knew a revision was necessary raised many questions that must be observed as part of this study. Andrea might have asked:

1. If this first draft is due how can I make this change and not have to do the entire paper over?
2. Where do I write the change in; all the words are close together and the lines are too?
3. Isn't the teacher the only one to make changes on the paper?
4. If I did pass the paper in with the change wouldn't it look messy?

Visibly Andrea was concerned with space and aesthetic issues, "How can I fit it in and make it look neat?"

Up until the middle of October all of Andrea's writings were imaginary stories. Her final story in the genre was on an assigned Halloween topic. Andrea started by drawing; as the drawing evolved she stated, "I know what it is going to be about. Ghosts go to meetings and plan how to scare people." But Andrea drew since she has little opportunity for rehearsal. Andrea wrote an imaginative, adequate story but when it was completed the researcher asked, "If you were to improve the story, what would you do?" Andrea did not know how she could improve the story.

Andrea had the potential to revise but did not. She had already expressed an interest in adjusting a logical problem in content. Her stories were well developed with good characters and complex sequences of action. Furthermore, she was a good critical reader of other writings. Still, Andrea's development as a writer had reached a plateau. On October 12th Andrea's teacher provided the appointment to release her potential as an effective, revising writer.

Like Brian's teacher, Andrea's asked the children to write about a personal topic, something that had happened to them. Prewriting was aided when children interviewed each other about their experiences and then practiced leads before writing. It is important to note that each of these emphases carries its own built-in opportunities for revision.

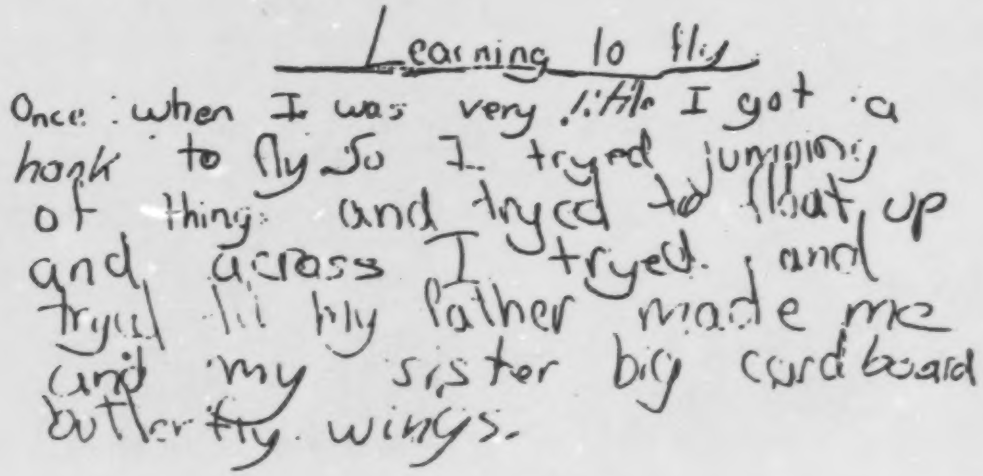
| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Choose a topic, a topic that has happened to you. | Andrea thought, and recalled an incident when she tried to fly. |
| 2. Ask a friend to interview you about your topic. | The interview began with a discussion of a bird nest and ended up with Andrea telling about an incident when she tried to fly with some wings her father had made. |
| 3. Don't start to write until you have tried three leads. | Andrea wrote three leads with each lead an improvement over the one before. Note that each is a *revision* of the other, not a new incident. |

Andrea wrote:

| | |
|---|---|
| Lead One: | Once when I was very little I got a hank to fly, so I tried jumping off things and tried to float up and across. |
| Lead Two: | I always wanted to fly, but whenever I tried it, I always fell Kaboom on the ground. |
| Lead Three: | Kaboom! That hurt! Why can't I fly? The birds do. Even with these wings, nothing happened. |

Each lead was more immediate. Furthermore, Andrea knew it since she chose the third as her best because, "It's happening now."

Andrea's handwriting changed during the writing of the three leads. Whereas before the writing was smaller, neater and erased when errors were made, now the writing is in a large scrawl suggesting the temporary nature of draft writing. Note how this view changed when Andrea wrote her first lead. By the start of the second sentence, Andrea knew the writing was temporary.



Learning to fly

Once when I was very little I got a hank to fly So I tryed jumping of things and tryed to float up and across I tryed. and tryed til my father made me and my sister big cardboard butterfly. wings.

Now it is December and Andrea revises her 500-700 word papers three to five times each. Her revisions involve such advanced characteristics as:

paragraph deletions
reordering sentences and paragraphs
insertions of new information

She continually reads drafts to child and teacher audiences, listens, and revises again. Andrea is even more advanced than Brian in the length of time a selection will evolve. Whereas Brian's selection evolves over a week's time, Andrea will maintain her revision and interest over a three-week period. As long as children continue to control the information and sense the continued improvement of the paper, the writing carries on. For some eight-year-old children, one to two days is the present limit, for others like Andrea, three weeks.

## Summary of Preliminary Findings on Revision

Early data already show some trends useful to the teaching of writing. Although only three cases are reported in this article on revision, data from other children play a part in adding weight to these early findings. Some of these trends may change, yet other professionals will find it useful to test these early findings for themselves. The research team would welcome an exchange of views with others who have observed children's practices in writing.

1. Children revise in other media forms such as block building, drawing and painting before they revise in writing. Children who demonstrate an overall learning stance toward revision in one area are more likely to demonstrate it in another such as writing.
2. When children try a new approach to writing, other areas in which they have been competent may suffer temporarily.
3. Beginning writers do not revise. Getting the new step down is enough. (When Sarah introduced a logical construction, she did not revise it even though it did not make sense to her.)
4. Early writing is often impressionistic. Children put words down for a certain feeling. Feelings are revised only if the child senses the feeling is not accurate. (Sarah "sprinkles" in "It is good. I love you." after her work is completed.)
5. Invented spellings go through stages of development along with the child. They fall into different classifications—first inventions, words in transition, stable inventions, sight words. Words that are more stable, as in stable inventions and sight words, are more likely to be revised.
6. Toward the end of the primary years many children reach a point of equilibrium when handwriting and spelling problems are behind them and messages flow easily onto the paper. Children do not revise these messages.
7. Eight-year-old children find it easier to revise topics about personal experiences than the experiences of others. They find it easier to recall their own experiences than the experiences of others.
8. Revision begins when children choose their own topics. Children who quickly arrive at a number of topics, learn to exclude some topics and write on others, are learning to revise.
9. Children who can quickly list personal topics for writing, and write a series of leads about the same subject, demonstrate a strong capacity for revision.

10. Peer audiences have an effect on children's revision and their use of new approaches to the writing process.
11. Teachers can play a significant role in releasing a child's potential for revision. (Note procedures used by Brian's and Andrea's teachers.)
12. When children no longer erase, but cross out, draw lines and arrows for new information arrangements, or change their handwriting to a scrawl, they indicate a changed view toward words. Words, for these children, are now temporary, malleable, or clay-like. The words can be changed until they evolve toward the right meaning for these children.
13. Children who write rapidly are more likely to revise in larger units and sustain a single composition for a longer period of time than those who write slowly. (Andrea writes at fifteen words per minute, does three or four drafts over a three-week period, whereas Brian writes at five-six words per minute, does two drafts over a one week period.)

Ketcham
9-28

"SOMEDAY I'M GONNA FIND A PENCIL THAT CAN WRITE!"

Dennis the Menace ® cartoon courtesy of Hank Ketcham and © Field Enterprises Inc.

# RESEARCH UPDATE

## Andrea Learns to Make Writing Hard

**Donald H. Graves**
*for the Committee on Research National Council of Teachers of English*

"I'm glad this classroom has lots of paper," Andrea said as she spread four clean white sheets onto her desktop. The eight year old slid her chair closer to the desk. "I'm going to write on this page," she explained. "Then if it's not perfect, I'll use the other pages to make it better."

Andrea bent over her desk. Her dark pixie hair covered her eyes. She wrote, then pulled back to see what she had said. Her light-blue eyes scouted the page, turning each section over in her mind. Now, with pencil poised, she works her way slowly down the page. A phrase is underlined; a detail, added. Soon her page is filled with jagged lines, starred sections, and scrunced-in additions.

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This third article in a series on the writing process was prepared by Lucy McCormick Calkins, associate of Donald H. Graves at the University of New Hampshire Writing Process Laboratory.

Over the next week, one page grew into four. On separate bits of paper, Andrea tried different descriptive paragraphs, experimented with several endings, and listed possible titles.

Three months ago writing was effortless for Andrea. She rarely read and reread a sentence, chewed the pencil, or wrestled with a word choice. Her words flowed easily onto the paper at the unusual rate of 15.5 words a minute. Often she wrote 400 words in a sitting.

It was as if there were no decisions to be made. "To be a good writer," Andrea said in early September, "you have to really know what you are writing about." That was her only criterion. The subject predetermined the words. All she had to do was put them down.

Andrea's words were not only predetermined. They were final. She did not revise. Occasionally Andrea corrected the word at her pencil point; adding a missing vowel, changing the shapes of a crooked letter. But she made no content revisions. And even proofing changes were made only if the words were still being written. Once a word was finished, it was final.

October, November and December have been breakthrough months for Andrea. Over these three months, she has come to see print as unfinished, and to see writing as selection. She has developed a very different understanding of the writing process.

Andrea's changes have been observed and documented day by day through an N.I.E.-funded study of how children change in the composing process. Each morning, when Andrea lays out her clean sheets of paper and slides her chair up to her desk, a researcher watches and listens. Soon both writer and watcher have filled their pages. Below are notes taken from a few minutes of observing Andrea while writing and a photocopy of Andrea's writing once the episode was over

*First Draft*

[1]My father gambed on the brakes for there on the edge of the road was a young doe[4] ~~eating the tall weeds and bushes~~.[2] *I could not believe it It did not seem scared or frightened.*[3]

*Notes*

1. begins without pausing
2. arrows this up to after "young doe"
3. begins to reread piece, pencil in hand, dotting *i*'s
4. as she rereads, says "I don't think I need this" and scratches it out

This is the third (see *Language Arts*, January, March 1979) in a series of articles reporting on the changes in the writing behaviors of twenty children in a New Hampshire elementary school. Andrea is developmentally the most advanced third grader in the project. This issue presents the sequence of problems Andrea deals with as she changes her approach to revision.

## Early Revision

Andrea's first content revision came on October 2. When Andrea finished writing page nineteen of her book about a homesick Chinese girl, the researcher intervened. While Andrea shook the writing cramp from her hand, the researcher asked, "Andrea, would you try looking back over this page you have just written and lightly circling any words you think you misspelled."

The researcher didn't intend to influence Andrea's writing behavior. The purpose was only to observe whether Andrea could recognize spelling mistakes. Unknowingly, however, the researcher had prompted Andrea into several new and significant writing behaviors. These include:

1. she reread her writing, which was rare for Andrea at this point

2. she reread with pencil in hand
3. as she reread, she re-examined and re-considered her words
4. she was asked to "mar" the page by circling misspelled words

Andrea reread page nineteen quickly. Part way down the page she stopped. She squinted at the lines, rereading them several times, voicing the words; all of which are behaviors linked to working out new problems. Her eyes climbed back up the page. Then they returned to the troublesome spot. For the first time this year, writing presented a problem for Andrea. She was restless, questioning, dissatisfied.

"I did this wrong," Andrea said finally, "the whole line." In the story, LinSu's mother had sent the little girl upstairs . . . but then, two lines later, without explanation, LinSu and her mother were talking together in the kitchen. "I need to put a sentence in that explains this," Andrea said. "But, but, but . . ."

A spelling mistake can be neatly erased, and new letters written instead. But adding a whole line permanently mars a paper.

When children write only one draft, there is no room to make content revisions without winding words up the paper's edge, or arrowing in sections. Revision means messing up a paper. Andrea was stuck.

Her teacher saw the dilemma. "It's ok, Andrea," she said. "Just draw an arrow and add the sentence." In this way, Andrea's teacher gave her permission to revise.

"In this case study of children's writing," Donald H. Graves, director of the research project has written, "it is sometimes difficult to know where development ends and instruction begins. The dilemma is not unlike the heredity-environment issue. Environment activates the genetic potential, just as the teaching environment interacts with the child to activate development" ("What Children Show Us About Revision," *Language Arts*, March 1979).

Andrea has had the potential to revise but has not done it. The premium she places on neatness—combined with her understanding of writing as a one-step process—has prevented Andrea from actualizing her potential. Permission from her teacher to draw arrows and insert sentences is an important and early step towards becoming a critical and deliberate writer.

Andrea still wrote without pausing to consider her choices. Day after day, she added more pages onto her LinSu book. The story seemed to write itself; Andrea knew her general plot, and each day she carried the words farther into the story. She returned to neither reread nor revise her words.

On October 9, Andrea's teacher intervened. "Andrea," she said, "I'd like you to work on your book at home, and try some shorter pieces while you are at school." The child smiled. She slid the book into her desk without finishing the sentence she was writing. She never brought the book home.

Soon Andrea was preparing to write a shorter piece; a Halloween story. "Why don't you draw it first," the teacher said, "That way you can think about what you are going to write."

Since school began in September, Andrea had never drawn a story before writing it, or discussed her ideas before printing them. Prewriting, until now, seemed to take only a minute or two. It meant deciding what to write about.

"All I know is it will be a scary night with a witch, and ghosts," she said as she picked up her pencil. Andrea sketched lightly, erasing often. She drew and redrew her ghost, working hard to show spookiness. Her story developed and changed as she drew it. "I know more of what it is going to be about," she said after awhile. "Ghosts go to meetings and plan how to scare people." In the center of the meeting she drew a candle, then pulled back, reconsidered, and changed her candle into a skull. Through drawing, she shaped the mood and plot of her Halloween story.

By the time Andrea began to write, she'd already revised the content of her story. Like many children, Andrea did extensive revision in other media forms such as drawing before she revised in her writing. It is not unusual that Andrea did not carry her revision process into her writing. She makes only one change as she writes her Halloween story, and this is at the very beginning of her story. She writes "Once upon a," then reconsiders, erases it, and begins more specifically with, "On Halloween night in the town of Lilyport . . ."

Andrea erased the word *Once*. She did not scratch it out. She still tries to be neat, and expects her words to be final.

Nevertheless, Andrea's teacher has given Andrea the opportunity to revise, and Andrea has made significant steps in revision.

| *Teacher* | *Andrea* |
|---|---|
| 1. tells her to reread paper and circle spelling mistakes | 1. Andrea rereads and finds logic problem. |
| 2. says it's ok to mar paper | 2. Andrea draws arrow, inserts line. |
| 3. tells her to write shorter pieces | 3. Andrea begins a piece more often, and with each beginning faces obvious decisions—topic, plot, beginning. |
| 4. encourages her to plan and draw topic before writing | 4. Extensive revision occurs within prewriting part of the writing process |

## Andrea Begins to Take Charge of Revision

The next time Andrea began to write, she again revised before she put her pencil onto the paper. This time the revision was oral. Andrea brought a bird's nest to school, intending to write about it. Her teacher suggested that a friend interview her about the bird's nest, "to find your story."

The interview began with questions about the bird's nest. "Where did you find it?" "Did you see any feathers near it?" "Did you see it being made?" Each question dead-ended. No, Andrea hadn't climbed the tree to get it. No, she hadn't seen it being made, or found feathers near it.

Eventually Diane found a question which worked. "Why did you bring the nest in?" she asked. Soon Andrea was telling her about her long-standing interest in birds, and about how she'd always wanted to fly when she was little.

Andrea wrote the beginning of her piece. She started writing neatly, carefully; intending, as always, this to be her only draft.

> Once when I was little I got a hank to fly. So I tried jumping off things and tried to float up and across. I tried and tried until my father made me and my sister cardboard wings . . .

Andrea was interrupted. A line was drawn under her beginning. "See if you can say it differently."

Soon Andrea had written three different leads, each one more immediate than the one before it.

lead 1: Once when I was little I got a hank to fly. So I tried jumping off things and tried to float up and across . . .
lead 2: I always wanted to fly, but whenever I tried, I always fell Kaboom! on the ground . . .
lead 3: Kaboom! That hurt! Why can't I fly? Birds do. Whenever I try it, nothing happens.

Andrea chose her third lead. "It's happening now." She liked the active, present-tense voice she'd achieved through writing and rewriting her lead. As she continued to write, however, she hesitated often. "How do I get my father to come in?" she asked. She read and reread as she wrote. The present tense was problematic for her. Always before, Andrea's writing began in the past tense and proceeded chronologically. Now she doesn't know how to sequence her piece because she has put the middle event first. Writing is hard for her.

Handwriting just can't matter yet. In this paper, Andrea's usual clean square letters become a loose, loopy scrawl. This happens for most children: when a child tries a new approach to writing, other areas suffer temporarily (see Sarah's "Woody" story, as described by Graves in "What Children Show Us About Revision, *Language Arts*, March 1979).

"I'll copy it over later," Andrea says. This is the first time Andrea regards her paper as a draft. It isn't final. She plans to copy it over.

Andrea does not view the second draft as a revision of her first "Flying" paper. It is a copy. The motivation to do it again is neatness. Nevertheless, it is significant to see that neatness is being relegated to a later stage in the writing process. Andrea has independently decided to make two copies. She can't be concerned with neatness until she has put her content onto the page.

Andrea's new concern with content perhaps comes from these factors:

1. For the first time this year, Andrea's writing topic comes from personal experience. Before, she has always written imaginary stories. When children write about something real and important to them, they care about "getting it right" on paper.
2. Andrea has pre-written her piece through an interview with Diane. She writes with a great deal of information which was brought out through prewriting. She has a lot to say.
3. From the beginning, when Andrea brought her bird's nest to school, she has had an audience for her "Flying" piece. Her other pieces this year were written in isolation. Children care more about their writing if they know it communicates with an audience.

Although Andrea planned to just copy over her "Flying" story to make it neat, she does not, in fact, copy. She intends to, but once she begins writing she quickly stops looking between drafts. Her second draft is written without careful reference to the first draft. It is different, but the changes are not deliberate.

Children who revise often reach this stage of revision and plateau here. If they write a piece more than once, the motivation is usually neatness or correctness. Yet in the process of doing the draft more than once, other changes are made unconsciously. When questioned why some of her phrases were different in the final copy, Andrea shrugged her shoulders. She hadn't meant to change things. Yet some sentences were smoother for having been written twice, and some transitions were less cumbersome.

It is significant to note that Andrea has begun to take a great many steps in revision without much teacher intervention. Previously, there was a 1:1 correlation betwen instruction and Andrea's steps forward. The locus of control has changed. Andrea is now less dependent upon teacher intervention.

| *Teacher* | *Andrea* |
|---|---|
| 1. Teacher prompts Andrea to write three leads. | 1. Each lead is more active, immediate. |
| | 2. Andrea *selects* her beginning from a number of choices. |
| | 3. Andrea writes in a different voice, with different, more abstract sequence. |
| | 4. Andrea is troubled by how to fit things in. She rereads often. Writing is hard |
| | 5. Andrea decides to relegate handwriting to a second copy |

and not to worry about words and copy during the first draft.

6. When Andrea copies, she makes unconscious revisions

Andrea has taken revision into her own hands. She writes in order to make her meaning clear to herself. When this happens, revision takes off.

### Revision Becomes Deliberate

Within a week, Andrea's unconscious changes become conscious and overt. Andrea soon circles awkward transitions in her rough copy, and deliberately tries to smooth them out as she copies it over. What is one day unconscious and covert, becomes conscious, only later to become unconscious and covert again.

A week later, when Andrea was copying over another piece for the second time, she again came to a halt. Just as three weeks earlier, she'd uncovered a logical mistake in LinSu, she again finds a troublesome passage. "I put this in the wrong place," Andrea said. "Shouldn't I have put it up ahead where I was writing about playing baseball with my sister?"

This time it is a paragraph instead of a sentence which needs to be moved. Again, spatial problems overwhelm Andrea. "What do I do" she asks anxiously. Andrea faces several dilemmas.

1. Still, she hesitates to mess up her paper. This time the effect would be even more drastic, as it is a whole paragraph which needs to be moved.
2. Moving a passage through drawing an arrow requires the writer to abstractly re-locate the passage.

Finally, Andrea wrote the paragraph on a separate sheet of paper, and used stars to show its position in the paper. For several minutes she struggled to re-orient herself. She read the whole piece several times, voicing it to herself, with her finger following her words.

One change led to another. Andrea found a second section which now seemed misplaced. She considered adding it into several different sections of the draft. None of them seemed to fit. Finally she eliminated the paragraph.

For the first time, Andrea's draft begins to resemble the working manuscript of a writer. One paragraph has been moved, another has been eliminated.

Now Andrea rereads her paper, this time, as predicted, deliberately examining her language. She rereads her beginning.

> I like to bat because the feel of the ball on the bat makes me feel proud that I can hit it. And one reson I like batting is because its something that you can't do on your first try.

As she rereads, she underlines the word *feel*, as if questioning it. She circles the pronouns, *you* and *your*.

This time when Andrea writes a second draft, she closely follows the first paper. Changes are sometimes put first on the working draft—as if it is a trial run—and then transferred to the final copy. These are her changes:

*First Draft*

I like to bat, ~~because~~ the feel of the ball on the bat makes me feel proud that I can hit it. And one reson I like batting ~~is because its something~~ you can't do on your first try. . .

*Notes*

1. period, new sentence
2. eliminate *because*
3. underlines *feel*, rewrite as sound
4. scratches out
5. Instead of "one reson" says "another reason." Has sense for the cumulative record.
6. changes to first person.

*Second Draft*

I like to bat. The sound of the ball on the bat makes me feel proud that I can hit it. And another reason I like batting is that I can't do it on my first try.

Words have taken on a malleable, claylike property. Andrea puts language on paper in order to sculpt and shape it. On

November 11, Andrea independently wrote seven leads before beginning her story, "My Dog's Pill." These are some of her leads:

1. Everytime I come home from school I have to give my dog her heartworm pill and it is VERY VERY hard.
2. Now today will you please eat it Just once for me. the one that leads you all the time.
3. Whenever I say 'eat' my dog goes wild. But when I say 'eat' and try to slip the pill in her mouth it doesn't work. So I try to hide it in some-food but somehow she manages to spit it out.

When Andrea finished the leads, she said, "I like writing leads because I can really find which is best instead of just starting on one and having it be not good. Until I get one right I keep writing leads. Usually the last one is best because I take different parts from different ones and keep moving them about."

At first Andrea spent more time molding and shaping leads than any other section of the paper. By mid-December, however, she was using the same process several times during a paper. Andrea's revision work travels in a sequence which appears to be typical for children who revise:

1. she revises only what is at her pencil tip, changing words which are still in-process.
2. she looks back and makes small proof-reading revisions on words which are already written.
3. she revises the beginning and end of a piece.
4. she revises middle sections of a piece.

## Revision Goes Underground

On December 13, Andrea reread her second draft of "The Big Fish." She'd already revised her lead six times, and was pleased with it. "Now I want to make the next section shorter," Andrea said. She took a bit of paper from her desk, and began to write possible ways to describe the feeling of having a fish on her line.

1. Dad, help me, I've got one! One what? A fish!!

Then Andrea looked back at her draft, and scratched the line out. "It's not good," she said. She thought for a few minutes, staring at her pencil. "I might try thinking back to fishing and remember what I really did." She paused. "I think I just shouted, 'Dad, help me! I've got one.'" She grabbed her scrap paper and quickly put her words into print.

2. Dad!! Help me! I've got one!

"The hard part is trying to decide what little part to put down," Andrea says. "I could write a big book, but I just want to put down a tiny bit." She thinks for a minute. "That's why I have to work a long, long time on a little section; to get it right."

Andrea wrote "3" on her paper and circled it. She was ready to try again. For a few minutes her pencil was still, then she brought it to the paper, held it there, ready to write. She pulled it away.

"What'd you almost write?" the researcher asked. Andrea blushed. "I was going to say, 'Just then a quick jerk awakened me and I looked and saw my pole bending,'" she said, "But it was way too long."

Again she was quiet, her pencil ready. Her eyes moved to an earlier draft, then she shook her head slightly. "What'd you just think?" the researcher questioned. "For a minute I wondered if I should stay with the sentence I have to start with," Andrea said. "But I decided not to."

More and more, Andrea revises internally now. What was once not existent became unconscious, then conscious and overt. Now it moves underground, and becomes covert.

Andrea writes more slowly now. She rereads as she writes, and squints at her page. She often averages only six or eight words a minute and writes only one hundred words in a sitting. And when she begins to write, she only takes out one piece of paper.

What new territory will Andrea lead us to when she again spreads four clean white pieces of paper onto her desk?

## CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS FOR *LANGUAGE ARTS**

| Manuscript Deadline | Journal Issue | Journal Theme(s) |
|---|---|---|
| June 1, 1979 | November/<br>December 1979 | *The child learning to read.* What was right about reading during the 1970s (tenth anniversary of the Right to Read)? Reading as a language process. Thoughts on the reading tail wagging the language dog. |
| August 1, 1979 | January 1980 | *Language arts for ALL children.* (e.g., pre-school, middle school, linguistically different, physically handicapped) Successes of the past and promising practices for the future. |
| September 1, 1979 | February 1980 | 1. *The child as listener.* If listening can be taught and should be taught—then how? Ideas for cohesive and reasoned programs.<br>2. *The child as linguist.* What should children know about the nature of language itself? |
| October 1, 1979 | March 1980 | *The child as creator.* Involving children with the arts of language (e.g., film, drama, music, writing, movement, storytelling). |
| November 1, 1979 | April 1980 | *Children and literature.* What do children expect from literature? A child-centered literature program. Libraries are for people. Etc. |
| December 1, 1979 | May 1980 | *The child as informer.* What can students tell us about learning how to listen, speak, read, and write? The language arts teacher as observer, questioner, listener, responder, record-keeper, etc. |

*Varied manuscript formats are welcomed. Possibilities include debates, interviews, point-counterpoint, original poetry, photo essays, position papers, satires, reviews, letters, and program descriptions.

# RESEARCH UPDATE

## A Six-Year-Old's Writing Process: The First Half of First Grade

Donald H. Graves

*for the Committee on Research*
*National Council of Teachers*
*of English*

When I arrive at Sarah's first grade classroom, she sometimes greets me with a request: "Let's go somewhere and write." or "Will you copy me?" I can never predict what Sarah will write, although I know the general characteristics of her writing. I don't know whether she will write playful nonsense, a non-sequential collection of events, or a conventional story with a beginning, middle, and end. And neither does Sarah.

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This fourth article in a series on the writing process was prepared by Susan Sowers, associate of Donald H. Graves at the University of New Hampshire Writing Process Laboratory.

Sarah is one of sixteen children chosen for their diversity from the first and third grades at Atkinson Academy, the public school for Atkinson, New Hampshire. Donald Graves, Lucy Calkins and I will observe the children for two years to learn how they change in their writing processes. We look for changes not only in *what* they write but in *how* they write. Graves chose the case study method because "Writing process research is virgin territory; we are only beginning to identify and understand some of the significant variables." Through a single case—Sarah—we observe in depth and over time in the classroom before we formulate hypotheses. Sarah, more than most children, dramatizes the pleasure and uncertainty beginning writers experience as they create writing problems to solve and attempt to solve them.

Sarah and her classmates began writing in September when their teacher, Mary Ellen Giacobbe, taught them to write as most first grade teachers do. She posted lists of correctly spelled words and thus determined the topic and content of their writing. They wrote on large pieces of paper, experience paper, about eleven by eighteen inches, with a blank space across the top for drawing and lines below for writing. Restricted by inexperience, the word list, and the desire to write correctly, the children wrote nearly identical compositions.

On October 22, Sarah wrote:

the leaves fall in the fall so beautiful red
orange green brown
rakkon aer kikti the food to the naest then
the wehter comes

Sarah used the teacher-made resources in the first part of her composition. In the second, she relied on her own. Invented spelling appeared in this early independent writing. Here is the translation of Sarah's invented spelling: "Raccoons are collecting the food to the nest. Then the winter comes." A few days later Sarah wrote a Halloween story from a different list:

At midnight I seed a skeleton
spider and a bat.

In late October, Giacobbe visited a first grade classroom where children wrote every day. They were inventive spellers and did not use a teacher's word-list. They wrote for each other and their teacher. She selected books for classroom publication and edited and corrected the spelling. But first draft spelling was only as accurate as the writers could spell on their own.

Mrs. Giacobbe showed their books to her class.

"That's cinchy. *We* can do that!" said Sarah and her classmates. They have been writers and inventive spellers since then. At Christmas time, Mrs. Giacobbe brought a word list her students had used in previous years. "They ignored my list," she said with a laugh.

Sarah wrote in six-page books already assembled for the young writers. She chose from lined or unlined paper in two sizes, eight and one half by eleven inches or half that size. Mrs. Giacobbe told the children they had a responsibility to write every day. The children chose their own topics and in most cases their own time to write. They took their completed books to Mrs. Giacobbe for a conference in which she first responded to the content and then to one problem in the writing. The lesson in the conference might have been leaving spaces between words, hearing a sound and writing it, or an aspect of punctuation for those who were ready. The children read their completed books to the entire class in a meeting after lunch and left them in the class library for anyone to read. After writing five books, the student could choose one to be published in a hard cover.

Few of the changes in Sarah's composing process have been as easy to identify as her use of words in a series when lists of resource words were available. Signs of mature writing appeared early in Sarah's writing. Since late October, Sarah has used subordinate clauses, adverbs, time markers (*one day, then*), sequences of actions, a variety of verbs (eighty-three different verbs in forty-one writing episodes), and revision (on November 8, she added fourteen words to her original thirty-five).

Although Sarah is a six-year-old beginning writer, her writing process follows the same stages as the writing processes of older children, adults, and professional writers.

All writers go through a prewriting phase before they put words on paper. Sarah is no different. Her favorite prewriting activities are talking and drawing. The source of her writing topics is her daily life—fear of the dark or strange noises at night, the weather, play with her brother or friends set in familiar surroundings of her house and bedroom. Woody Owl and other toy animals come to life in Sarah's stories. Their adventures with Sarah and each other occupy over half of her books.

Before Sarah writes, she draws a scene and explains it to the researcher or another young writer who is usually drawing and talking, too. Then she writes about the scene she drew. Sarah finishes the page and begins the same sequence for her next episode. When she finishes a six-page book, she draws an elaborate "The End" and takes it to her teacher for a conference. Sometimes she reads it to another child or an adult before the conference. She may discover an omission or an inconsistency while she rereads her story, either in the drawing or the writing. She revises immediately when she finds a problem without waiting to be told. Sometimes Sarah writes a nonsense book or a sentence with mixed-up syntax. If the meaning is clear to her but unclear to others, Sarah sees no need to revise. "That's a silly book, Sarah," or "I don't get it," the other children are likely to say. "I don't care," Sarah replies to their objections. "It's all right. I can do it any way I want to." When Mrs. Giacobbe demands explanations of her nonsense, Sarah makes up reasons for writing her confusing sentences and stories. Sarah is still too egocentric to let her audience spoil her play.

Sarah wrote two kinds of stories, and her writing behavior for each was as different as the stories themselves. An observer watching Sarah from a distance would know the kind of story she is writing by the number of times she leaves her writing to go to the library, to talk to a friend across the room, to eat her snack, or to collect pieces of paper around the room. When Sarah is restless, she is writing a story with action and a sequence of events. When she is content to remain at the writing table, she is writing a quick, simple book which lists as many of the hero's good qualities as Sarah can think of before she fills the six pages.

Sarah has written both kinds of books since she began to write. On October 23, Sarah wrote this quick, simple book of praise—an attribute book. The content is highly affective as she lists the good qualities of the sun:

I like the sun.
It feels good.
The sun looks nice.
It looks fun.
I like the fun.
It feels good.

Although Sarah wrote proportionately fewer attribute books as time passed, she didn't stop writing them. Here is an example of an attribute book written on January 23, near the end of the first half of first grade:

Me and Chipper
Me and Chipper have lots of fun.
We have fun.
I love Chipper so much.
I won't stop loving Chipper.
It's so much fun.
It is fun.

Sarah's attribute books require little planning. They are affective rather than cognitive in content. A few verbs—*like, love, feel,* and forms of *to be*—fill the verb slot. Adjectives are central to Sarah's attribute books, and she has some favorites. She used *nice* in eight of her forty-one stories, *good* in seven, *fun* in five stories (not counting its use as a noun), and *pretty, beautiful, little,* and *happy* each in four stories. When Sarah finds that writing a story in chronological order will not fill her book, she adds a page or two of attribute sentences to fill the gap. Since no order is required in an attribute book, she does not have to solve many problems when she writes in this genre.

When Sarah wrote "Me and Chipper," she spent twice as much time on drawing as on writing, eight minutes to draw the six pictures and four minutes to write the six sentences.

Sarah wrote a second kind of book, the action-sequence book. This book places more demands on Sarah as she writes it. Before I judged a book an action-sequence book, it must tell a story in a sequence of at least three events.

Sarah wrote action-sequence books from the beginning, and she wrote proportionately more of them throughout the year. Here is an example from October 24 with two words in Sarah's invented spelling that cannot be decoded:

When we went for a walk in the sun, we saw a piece of (salveigna) so we did bring it home. When we got home, we put it in a bottle of water and we (wiet) it in the bottle of water

Here is a later example of an action-sequence book Sarah wrote in early January:

Oscar Owl Opens Oysters
Oscar walks to the river every day.
He catches oysters.
He eats them.
He brings them home to eat.
He watches tv first.
He eats them second.

On November 30, Sarah wrote "Woody Owl," an action-sequence book. First, Sarah outlined what she would write about. "Woody's going to eat a poison egg, no, a poison worm, and he's going to die. Poor Woody." Pointing to the second page of her book she said, "He's going to eat the worm here," and pointing to the third, "He's going to die here."

While Sarah illustrated her second page, Chris walked by and Sarah said, "Guess what's going to happen to Woody? He's going to die—he's going to eat a poison worm—and he's going to come to life again." She had planned another step. After giving the most detailed and coherent plan for a book of the year so far, Sarah wrote:

Woody is cute.
He took a worm.
Woody dead.
Woody wake.
Woody good.
Woody nice.

This is the most telegraphic book Sarah or any of her classmates has written. Perhaps she felt no further need to write a story that she had told twice.

As Sarah drew the pictures of Woody Owl, she began composing aloud: "'Woody . . .' What should I say? 'Woody is . . .'" Two pages later she composed aloud again: "Poor Woody. 'Woody died.' She did not compose aloud again until January 8. Then she drew, spoke, and wrote what she said, and followed the procedure again. Not until March did Sarah make composing aloud part of her writing process.

Sarah put a series of three actions into her book. Her new, mature behaviors—

planning ahead and composing aloud—seemed to place an unaccustomed strain on her writing process. Sarah stopped writing "Woody Owl" to get unneeded pieces of paper in other parts of the classroom, read two books to the researcher, eat her snack, and have three conversations with other children. She took off at a run the moment she finished to find still another audience for her book.

Sarah's behavior is like that of any writer who is trying to solve a new problem. Both Sarah and an adult writer devise a system of escapes from the piece of writing, and both may be trying to achieve distance. With distance, the writer can view the piece with more objectivity in order to incorporate unfamiliar material into an unfamiliar form. The adult may drink coffee, pace across the room, clean the typewriter keys, or call a friend to postpone the difficult task. Sarah has developed similar strategies to give herself distance from a new task—telling her story in chronological order.

Usually Sarah does not know what she will write about until she draws. She must write and draw to discover the story. When asked, "What will happen next?" Sarah usually says, "Wait and see," or "I don't know yet. I have to think." She has internalized the question to such a degree that in a January writing episode, Sarah asked the researcher, "Now, what do you think will happen next?"

Sarah draws to discover what will happen. On January 11, Sarah wrote in a book she had begun a month earlier with this first page already written:

The pretty little girl.
Her name is Kristin.

Sarah drew a girl in her room. She had a flower in her hand, a doll in her canopy bed, a refrigerator, door, window, and night light. Sarah wrote:

She loves flowers the best.
She hates school the worst.

On the next page Sarah drew a similar scene but added a new face with sharp teeth. Sarah seemed startled. She said, "Now wait a doggone minute! A bad guy. He's come to kidnap her."

Sarah composed these sentences aloud before writing.

She jumped up.
She was scared.
She saw the villain.

Then Sarah said, "Wait, the bulb fell out," referring to the night light.

She turned the page and composed aloud before drawing, "She punched him out."

The researcher asked about an object in the drawing, "What's that?"

"A night light falling," she said. "It broke. He's sorry. She punched him."

Sarah wrote:

She punched him.

Sarah composed her last two sentences aloud before writing: "She's so glad," and "She's asleep."

The little girl's victory over the villain is Sarah's victory over her fear of the dark. In the fall as the days grew shorter and the nights longer, she wrote, "I hate night. I love morning." Night is creepy, scary, filled with strange sounds, and dark. She likes sunshine and fills her books with it. Sarah arranged a confrontation between good and bad, darkness and sunshine. Although the villain broke her night light, the little girl won.

Sarah's discovery of her subject while writing need not be equated with thoughtlessness or immaturity. Sarah's writing process is a bit like William Faulkner's. Faulkner described his writing process like this:

> It begins with a character, usually, and once he stands up on his feet and begins to move, all I do is trot along behind him with a paper and pencil trying to keep up long enough to put down what he says and does.

Not all of Sarah's discoveries produce such a successful book. The novelist Rumer Godden said, "Of course one never knows in draft if it is going to turn out, even with my age and experience." Sarah's syntax near the third page of a book sometimes suffers when she strains to write more than an attribute book. Here are some examples:

| | |
|---|---|
| November 20 | "He made naughty." |
| November 27 | "I was sad. I have nothing to cry what eating this turkey." |
| November 27 | "He got home just in time to watch his favorite program and lamp." |
| December 1 | "The villain is fighting on Ann from hunting cause Ann is a girl." |
| December 15 | "We are no care or love to our Christmas tree." |
| December 20 | "With Wood it's fun but both it's good." |

When Sarah attempts a new step in writing, the burden may alter her syntax, penmanship, spelling, or any recently learned feature of her writing. They will no longer be automatic. Graves has said, "When children try a new approach to writing, other areas in which they have been competent may suffer temporarily."

Sarah has changed in the prewriting phase of the writing process by drawing people in profile as part of her rehearsal. Before December 1, Sarah drew static pictures with inactive figures facing forward. Profiles give Sarah a range of choices for showing her characters in action she did not have before. People can face right or left, sit or stand, move arms and legs, and chase each other. In October and November, Sarah seldom drew characters in action and only seven of her twenty-four books written in those months are action-sequence books. After December 1 when Sarah began drawing profiles to illustrate her books, eleven of her seventeen books written in December and January were action-sequence books.

Within books, profiles in the illustrations give a clue to the type of book. In "The Pretty Little Girl," eleven figures were drawn in profile and only one faced forward. In "Me and Chipper," all fourteen figures faced forward. Sarah rehearsed no action or movement when she drew those pictures. Although drawing did not cause the action in Sarah's stories, drawing figures in motion may have given her access to information through rehearsal. Drawing may help children control the action in a story by sequencing and slowing the events in their stories.

We can generalize some of our preliminary findings about Sarah's writing process to the other first grade children in her class:

- Writers, from beginners to professionals, seem to follow the same steps in composing—prewriting, writing, and revision (although first graders revise much less). When a new vehicle for rehearsal emerged (Sarah drew in profile and composed aloud), the writing product changed too.
- Writers need distance or objectivity. A new writing problem—usually one the writer creates in order to accommodate new information—commands more attention. Less attention is left to solve other problems. Syntax, spelling, or punctuation may suffer, and the writer may need more distance from a new kind of writing than from a routine piece of writing.
- When choosing topic and form independently, Sarah and her classmates wrote narratives more than other forms as the year progressed.
- Writers discover their meaning while they write because they think and play on paper.

### Implications for Teaching First Grade Writing

1. Teachers must ask children to choose their own topics for writing from the wealth of their daily experiences. This is painless for most children early in first grade. Assigned topics are unnecessary and cheat the child of an important writing task.
2. Children need to rehearse before they write. They may need to draw, play, or talk before they write.
3. A change or elaboration in rehearsal such as drawing in profile, planning a story, or composing aloud may lead to a more sophisticated piece of writing or unexpected problems.
4. Children may not always have a clear idea of what they will write about. They may discover a better story while writing than they would have planned ahead of time. They may write to find out what their stories are.
5. When children try to solve a new problem in writing, their syntax and mechanics may not meet previous standards of correctness or logic.
6. Children need permission to explore, experiment, and make errors. Rigid standards of correctness and neatness restrict children to writing about what they can spell correctly and express without a struggle. They need to know they can correct their errors when they reread their drafts or allow the teacher to edit.
7. Children need a writing classroom where active rehearsal is encouraged. Writers need breaks from writing to achieve distance. They will need to move in the room, talk, and draw.

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# *Let Children Show Us How to Help Them Write*

Donald H. Graves

*Abstract*

Preliminary findings are presented from a current two-year site case study observing the development of primary children's composing, spelling, and motor behaviors during the writing process. Handwriting is influenced by all phases of the writing process and problems unique to different stages of the writer's development. Children's earliest efforts at writing resemble their speech habits in their lack of organization. Later, when children choose their own writing topics, the language for expression, and written format, the compositions become more successful. Handwriting is one component of writing that illustrates the nature of children's decision making processes. Teachers attempt to guide the children's craft to greater clarity in drawing letters, word order, word separation, page placement, and later, in rewriting and use of prosodic techniques.

Six-year-old Toni and Jennifer paint side by side as they stand at their easels. "I'm goin' to fill this one all in with red," says Toni, as she points to the outline of a house with the tip of her brush. When Toni speaks, she sprays her words in many directions as she paints and glances around the room at the same time. She knows that Jennifer can hear and understand her words without sending them in a specific direction.

Fifteen minutes later Toni is seated in the writing area. She writes ("I love super owl and I kiss him").

Words go up, down, or across for beginning writers like Toni. Toni has been writing for two weeks and does not know yet that written words, unlike spoken words, must conform to space, have a set direction, and have specific beginnings and endings.

Toni wants to write about "super owl." Even though she is just learning how to control the pencil and use space on the paper, it is the urge to tell that makes her write from 250 to 300 words per week without specific assignment. Toni writes this much because she controls the topic, spelling, and the process of discovering how to get her message down on paper.

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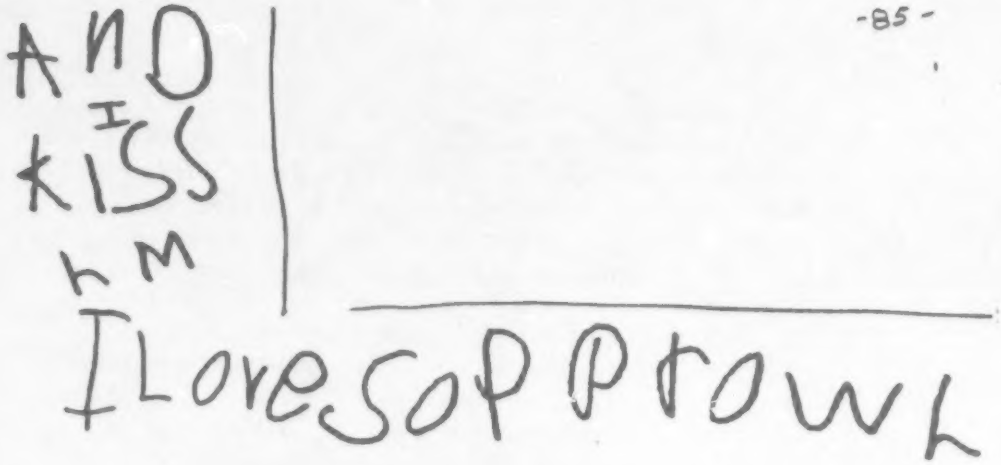
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When we let children like Toni show us their process of writing, we let them show us how to teach them. Best of all, they show us the energy source that made them write in the first place. When children do the pushing, they have control. Child control in this study is defined as child initiative. Children choose their topics, language inventions, discover space on the paper; and teachers follow, observing, solving problems with them, in order to steer their craft into greater clarity.

When children are given control of the writing process, teachers need information to know what they see, to sense the significance of different child struggles. Children's handwriting is one place where the struggle shows. But the handwriting is only one component of the writing process. Handwriting is more than the mere formation of letters on a page at one moment in time. It is influenced by all phases of the writing process, children's changes from speaking to writing, and problems unique to different stages of a writer's development.

This paper will take a broad view of handwriting. It will seek to explain handwriting performance in the midst of child development and the writing process. The information has come from preliminary findings in our study—A Two-Year Case Study Observing the Development of Primary Children's Composing, Spelling, and Motor Behaviors During the Writing Process, funded by the National Institute of Education.

Through this grant from NIE, we are following twenty children over a two-year period. Each day three full-time researchers are with the children, carefully recording data as the children compose. Composing is broadly viewed from the child's drawing, painting, working with crayons, pens, pencils, to the composing of first, second, and third drafts. The data come from collections of all forms of composing, direct observation of the child writing, and video tapes made during the composing process.

This in-depth study of children's composing is not a controlled design. Rather, it is a case study of twenty children—in grades one and three—who were chosen because of their *differences* on a preselected developmental composing scale. The study seeks to describe in detail the "what" of composing in order to explain the "why" of child behaviors during the writing process.

Children have a strong urge to write. They like to see their own scratches and marks everywhere: hearths, bedroom mouldings, bathroom walls, moist windowpanes, paper bags, old envelopes, and sidewalks. They want to be seen and heard.

Speech comes before writing. Since they are both communications—and speech comes first—it is only natural that writing should bear the imprint of speech. Children try to make writing like speech, but early attempts to make them the same lead to crude messages and script that is often unintelligible to both writer and reader. Speech and writing simply are not the same. Only advanced writers can make writing sound like speech.

Children do not need to be aware of the process of crossing over from speech to print. They don't need to be aware of the steps of learning to write any more than they needed to be aware of learning to speak. Children are so delightfully self-centered that their high assumptions about message quality provide a natural cloak of protection for both problem solving and experimentation. Remove this cloak and the child suddenly becomes unnaturally aware of the rigors and demands of the writing process. Their urge to write is relentless enough for parents and teachers to just let it happen. Their role is to sense the child's intentions, note what aspects of transition stand in the way, and then provide help.

The data here show children's changes from speech to print. The data are reported in four sections starting with drawing, since drawing and writing are much the same for children. Next come child discoveries of word order, separation, and page placement. Then, when redrafting appears, new uses of,space and handwriting are reviewed. Finally, the significance of child use of prosodics in speech and print are discussed. In each section, examples of child behavior have been chosen from a large body of data to illustrate common child practices.

*Drawing*

Toni drew before she wrote, "I love super owl and I kiss him." When Toni drew, she chose the subject and gained control of the information as she sketched in the figure of a flying owl. As Toni drew she supplied the energy and information for her teacher to help her with the writing. Drawing is the driving force behind much of Toni's writing. It serves as a rehearsal for the text as well as an important bridge from speech to print.

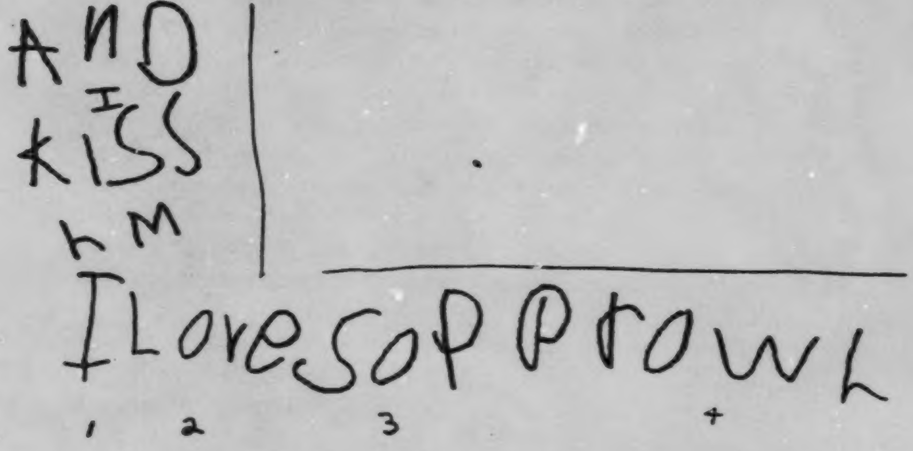
Toni needed to draw because the drawing helped her know what to write. Teachers will see beginning writers like Toni draw before they write if they give them the right paper. The right paper has a large space at the top where children can draw, or at least is plain, unlined paper with large enough space to permit both drawing and writing.

Teachers can find out for themselves what drawing does for writing. Ask children before they draw, "Tell me, what will you write after you finish drawing?" If drawing is important, they do not usually know what they will write until they draw. On the other hand, when the drawing is completed and the teacher says, "Now tell me what you will write," she will get a more specific statement about what the child will write.

Drawing helps children change from speech to print. When John is seated next to Fred in a sandbox pushing mounds of sand with his bulldozer to make a fort, Fred knows what John means when he says, "This is gonna keep out the bad guys." Fred can see what John means because the situation tells him. But when John writes, he must supply words to describe the situation in which the message will fall. If John can draw before he writes, he creates the setting for his print, thus helping both himself and the child who will read his paper.

When children control their subjects, they write more, gain greater practice in writing, and ultimately care much more about the appearance of their letters on the page. For the beginning writer, drawing is one important means of maintaining that control.

When Toni first drew figures of people, they were large, turned on their sides, and occupied different parts of the paper. She was learning proportion, control of the instrument, and how to use space contained in the paper. Toni continues to discover space when she writes. Note again Toni's message about "super owl" ("I love super owl and I kiss him"):



*Space*

In this instance, words flow from left to right (1-4) as well as from the top down (5-8). On other occasions, Toni will send a column up from the right hand side of the page, just as in this instance, she came down from the top of the left side. Toni generally understands that words go from left to right as shown in steps 1-4. But she has a dilemma. Step 4 falls in the lower right hand side of the paper. She has run out of space. It is hard for children to predict with accuracy where the full message will end. Since there is a drawing on the page, the message needs to go with the illustration. She solves the problem by coming down to the line on the left side. Adults may consider this a major problem. It is not to Toni. She knows the meaning of the message; at this point in her development she is satisfied with just the placement of message ingredients on the paper. She assumes that if she knows the message, others will know as well, regardless of a lack of left to right order.

Toni writes as she speaks when words run together in steps 1-4. Words run together without spaces in between. When Toni read this selection, her voice rose and fell just as the words undulated across the page. Toni's intention to simulate speech seemed almost deliberate since her addition of steps 5-8 shows her knowledge of word units.

Six-year-old John wrote, "Ste fosd," for Steve Austin. John was trying to tell where one word ended and the other began. For John, words in speech flow together like "hamaneggs." All children at some stage in their writing must go through the process of separating words from speech into discrete units.

### *Further Adjustments to Space Problems*

[illegible] young [illegible] rmation, with a left to right flow and spaces between words, new problems of space arise. The problems are caused by new information, the beginning of redrafting. The discovery of new information without any place to put it can come as early as six years of age. Six-year-old Chris had just read a book about prehistoric animals and was composing one of his own to share with the children. Chris and his teacher had this dialogue:

| | |
|---|---|
| Teacher: | I see that you were able to put in the word "may" to show that "Brontosauruses may travel in families." [Chris had been able to sandwich in the small word without erasing.] But you didn't say why they travel in families. |
| Chris: | They travel in families to protect the young. |
| Teacher: | Do you think that is important information? |
| Chris: | Yes, but there isn't any place to put it. [The writing goes from left to right over to the right hand margin at the bottom of the paper. Above this writing is a picture of a brontosaurus.] |
| Teacher: | Look the paper over and show me where you could write it in. |
| Chris: | There isn't any [voice rising]. |

Teacher: Look the *entire* paper over and put your hand on any space where there isn't writing or drawing. [There is space above the drawing.]

Chris: Well, I could put it up here [motions to top of the paper] but it would look stupid. The other part is down here.

Teacher: How could you show they were connected?

Chris: I could put an arrow down here pointing to the part that's at the top.

Teacher: Good, but you'll need to connect the arrow with the top. This is what writers do when they are getting their books ready for the publisher.

Chris knew additional information would create a mess. His usual approach was to erase words to put new ones in. Now his teacher had shown him how to con[illegible] there is a problem of space. She had also shown him that this draft is temporary, that a rewriting is necessary. Young writers need to learn a whole repertoire for messing up their paper to deal with new information, organizations, and adjustments. This also adds to the importance of crafting the letters in the final draft. If children have controlled the process, know their information is good, the quality of their handwriting improves.

Just as children learn the appropriate use of language within the family, the playground, or school, they need to learn the context of various kinds of handwriting and different uses of space. Most handwriting texts do not deal with the appropriateness of handwriting in context. Rough draft handwriting is not the same as handwriting in final draft form. Children who are preoccupied with word shape or correct spelling in an early draft lose control of the draft and their information suffers.

Children show us in their handwriting when they take on the draft concept. Eight-year-old Andrea, like many writers, hoped her first draft would be her last. About the sixth word into this selection, her handwriting shows that she decided another draft would follow:

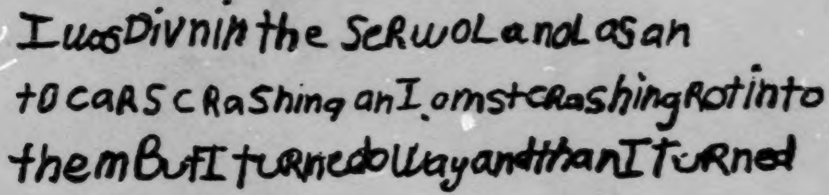
# Learning to fly

Once when I was very little I got a hank to fly. So I tryed jumping of things and tryed te float up and across I tryed and tryed til my father made me and my sister big cardboard butterfly... wings.

Later, Andrea went on to draw arrows, cross out lines, until the message was shaped to her liking. Handwriting, in final draft, properly dealt with the aesthetics and etiquette necessary for good communication.

### *Prosodic Features Show Us Children Are in Control*

Eight-year-old Scott did not like to write. He wrote at four words per minute with no spacing and over 45 percent of his words were misspelled. Letters were of various sizes, ran together, and were poorly formed. In October Scott's writing looked like this:



IwasDivnin the SeRwoLandLasan
t0caRSCRaShing anI.omstcRashingRotinto
themButI tuRnedaWayandthanITuRned

Since October Scott has been required to write but with this difference: he controls the topic, information, and language. He also gets help from two audiences: the teacher and other children. Help comes principally at the point of clarifying Scott's understanding of the information and the appropriateness of the meaning he wants. Help comes in early drafts, then Scott rewrites for final copy. Two months later Scott's writing looked like this:

Scott showed that he had re-entered the writing process on his own terms through speech features marked in the written text. Children try to "speak" through their texts when they feel they have control. The elements that show this kind of involvement are called prosodic features. The use of these features put sound, stress, pause, and intonation back into writing. Toni showed her use of prosodic features when she made important words large and her words undulated across the page as in the rise and fall of speech patterns. Scott, along with other children striving for "sound," show early voice through:

I was going dowr the Stairs and I took two Steps and!! Then I Slipped and fell down fifteen Step on my back. Ow yikes then on the last step I Went boom!! I was aching and I was in pain. Then I said I im never going to go down those Stairs unless I have to. And my brother Said, "Well if you had on your Shoes it wouldn't have happened" And I Said Shutup.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Use of capitals.* | Important words, especially nouns that carry major meaning, are written in capital letters. Other words may have a single capital letter at the beginning. |
| *Rewritten words.* | Words or letters that mark key points will be run over several times with the pen or pencil. Words blackened more than others show points of emphasis from speech. |

Exclamation points and interjections also put sound back into written language. When children first discover them, their delight in simulating sound leads to the excessive use of these prosodic features. For example, sentences of minor importance receive one exclamation point, whereas those of greater importance receive from two to four. The loudest and breathiest of all receives a large, blackened exclamation point that takes up two lines on the vertical.

Six-year-old Jenny needs to produce sound as she writes. It is her method of developing a voice, staying oriented in space, producing the right sound and symbol, as well as in maintaining control of the writing process. Through a very sensitive microphone tied in with a video recorder, the data show that Jenny's writing contains a high ratio of sound to written symbol, thus marking more clearly how much oral language must accompany

Figure 1. The relationship of sound to written symbol in Jenny's message: "All of the reindeer loved them," written as "Loll ave the reindrer love em."

**LINE 1:**
*Track I:* l all, all, of, all of the, the, the, all of the reindeer
(sounded) s
*Track II:* L oll ave the
(written)
**LINE 2:**
*Track I:* rein, ruh, rein loved them, all, of, them, the, muh, muh
(sounded) S S S
*Track II:* R iendeer love e m
(written)

writing for her to make an effective transition from speech to print. A sample of the data in Figure 1 shows a typical ratio for both Jenny and other writers at this stage of development. Track I shows Jenny's sound and Track II shows at what point the letter was written in relation to the sound on Track I. For example, in line 1, Jenny sounded an "l," said "all" and wrote an L.

Children hear themselves say what they mean and go on. Therefore, they speak along with the writing and the speaking is an essential part in the composing. Transcriptions from other beginning writers show a wide range of voicing types. Thus far we have classified these voicing patterns:

| *Type of Language* | *Example* |
|---|---|
| 1. Says the message *before* it is written. | "The boy will go." |
| 2. Says the word *before* it is written. | "boy" |
| 3. Says the word *after* it is written. | "boy" |
| 4. Rereads message *after* it is written. | "The boy will go." |
| 5. Makes sounds of letter components. | "buh, buh, oi, oi" |
| 6. Says letter names for spelling | "b-o-y" |
| 7. Procedural statements: | "I haven't got any more room." |
| 8. Statements to other children. | "This boy is goin' to blow the bad guys up." |

With the exception of statements to other children, voicing is only intended for the child who is composing. A person standing nearby is unaware of most of the sounding, since only the sensitive microphone can pick up these data.

### *Summary*

Children need to control their own writing. But they can't do it alone. Teachers need to help them maintain control because when they are successful, children see themselves as important learners with things to say. Furthermore, when children control the writing process, they write far beyond traditional expectations, spell better, and take pride in the craft of handwriting.

It isn't easy to help children control their own writing. Teachers need information to know when and how to help. Preliminary research from this study of children's composing shows that handwriting is a critical index for showing where to begin to help children.

When children first write, they treat writing as speech. They draw to supply context for the subject, run words together, spell words as they sound, let words run around the page, speak out loud when they write, blacken in letters, use capitals and exclamation points liberally.

Redrafting demands a new view of space and aesthetics. Just when the child has solved early problems of space, new information demands different help from the teacher. But this new step is a boon to good handwriting. When the craft of handwriting follows the crafting of the child's *own information*, a greater level of excellence in final copy is achieved.

Today Toni isn't bothered when her words run together or down the side of the page. Tomorrow she will be. She will need to see another way to handle the problem. Her teacher will need to know how to help Toni. Good teachers see these disturbances, and ask timely questions to show children how to solve problems for themselves. They ask good questions because they know how children learn to write.

# RESEARCH UPDATE

## Children Learn the Writer's Craft—Lucy McCormick Calkins

Donald H. Graves
*for the Committee on Research*
*National Council of Teachers of English*

How do young children change from play to craft in the writing process? As guest columnist this month, Lucy Calkins follows changes in children's writing from the first through fourth grade. Data, from a study funded by the National Institute of Education, are shared in this sixth in a series of research articles on young writers. An earlier Calkins article, "Andrea Learns to Make Writing Hard" (*Language Arts*, May 1979) is a part of the same study.

*D. H. G.*

"Look out!" the six-year-old cried. "The enemy is comin'." Alex penciled a wobbley spaceship onto the corner of his paper. "Boom! Boom! Pkeeeoow!" The first grader beside Alex glanced up in time to see giant swirls of pencil flames spread over Alex's paper. Soon Alex had destroyed his careful spaceships. Only a scribble remained.

Now Alex writes, "The whole world was destroyed."

THE HL WD WZ DSD

He mutters to himself, "Destroyed. Deeeee-stroyed. E. I hear an E." With his thick red pencil, Alex piles a dark E on top of the letters DSD. "Destroyed." Again he sounds the word. "Deee-stroy-ttt." A *t* is added on top of Alex's already illegible smudge of letters. "There, I spelled that one good, I did," Alex announced proudly to himself.

Alex doesn't care that his marks are illegible. He rarely looks back to notice now letters look, and he never volunteers to show his finished papers to a reader. Alex writes, spells, and represents for the sheer fun of it. There is no goal beyond the doing. Process is everything. Writing, for Alex, is play.

When nine-year-old Amy writes, she shifts between fast, impulsive composing and close, careful tinkering. For a few minutes she may spill bold print onto the page, writing at the unusual rate of twenty words a minute. "All of a sudden I think of an idea and I'm writing wicked fast," the nine-year-old said after one such spurt. Then her hand stops. Amy pulls into the draft and views it with the critical eye of a reader.

"I like this part," Amy may say as she traces around one section of the paper. She begins a second draft, a third. Some drafts spill themselves onto the paper. Others are carefully crafted. As Amy writes, she cycles between playful involvement with the process and critical concern with the product. This is the writer's cycle of craft.

This paper is the story of writing as it shifts from play to craft. It is the story of Amy and of Alex, and also of fourteen other children. Donald Graves, Susan Sowers and I are observing these children in their classrooms. We will follow them on a day-to-day basis for two years. We selected the eight first graders and eight third graders because they represent a wide span of developmental levels. Alex is one of the lowest children on our developmental scale. At the opposite end of the spectrum is nine-year-old Amy.

Through video-tapes, observation notes, and photocopies of their work, we are documenting and studying their development as writers. We are building a tentative developmental map of how children change composing, penmanship and spelling behaviors during the writing process. This paper will follow changes in children's writing process in order to illustrate how their writing moves from play to craft.

In his book, *The Arts and Human Development*, Howard Gardner writes:

> The play impulse becomes the art impulse (supposing it is strong enough to survive the play years) when . . . it becomes conscious of itself as a power of shaping semblances which shall give value for other eyes or ears and shall bring recognition and reknowing. (1973, p. 166)

When Alex piles letters into a smudge and explodes drawings into a scrawl, he is not "shaping semblances which shall give value for other eyes or ears. . . ." The six-year-old cannot envision an eventual audience or regard his work as a product. He can't shift into an imagined future. He can't climb out of his own shoes and become a reader. He can't view his piece through the eyes of another person.

Amy shifts between involvement and distance, between writer and reader. Her perspective on a draft is flexible and controlled. Her time and space framework encompasses both the play-like, all-present, all-personal quality of Alex's writing and the conscious "shaping of semblances . . . for other eyes or ears . . ." which Gardner suggests is one distinguishing quality of art.

Following are the stages and sequences between Alex and Amy, between play and craft.

### Writing as Play

Alex sweats when he writes. Sometimes he spends several minutes toiling over a single word. His fingers cramp from squeezing the fat red pencil. Writing is hard work.

The playfulness of Alex's writing comes not because it is easy but because the time and space dimensions of his writing are like those of play. There is no planning, and there is no goal. For Alex, writing, like play, is present tense.

When it is time to write, six-year-old Alex picks up his pencil and begins. There is no delay. If a researcher asks, "What will your story be about?", Alex is dumbfounded by the stupidity of the question. "How should I know," he says. "I haven't written it yet." Then Alex begins to write. He prints whatever comes to mind, to pencil point. He doesn't deliberate over topic choice or the lay-out of his drawing and words. In his egocentricity, Alex does not—indeed, he cannot—get outside himself and consider what topics his readers might enjoy.

The people in the story all die and have funerals. Alex shoves the paper into his cubby and immediately joins the highway crew in the block area. Writing ends as abruptly and as completely as it began.

During the early part of first grade, Sarah, like Alex, was oblivious to the needs of an audience. She chose her topics easily, and was content to play with the sounds and textures of language when she wrote. Writing was messing about in her medium.

All About Yellow

Yellow is stronger than blue and red. I love purple instead. Orange sits on hat. Yellow sits on cat. Red sits on mat to cat to hat. Yellow is nice. I love yellow best. I love purple. Red and yellow fight. They won't stop until they are done. Yellow is a piece of sun. They have fun so yellow is the best.

Other children would listen to Sarah's stories and say, "Your book is silly, Sarah," or "I don't get it." Sarah didn't care. She wrote for herself. Researcher Susan Sowers comments, "Sarah (was) still too egocentric to let her audience spoil her play" (1979, p. 831).

By February, Sarah's audience was beginning to spoil her play. She wrote less. Unfinished books accumulated in her folder. Nothing satisfied her anymore. Her increasing sense of audience deadlocked her into writer's block.

Sarah's classmate, Annie, also does not consider a future audience in early first grade. Annie reads, "We kept on losing Hilary."

WEN KAPTON LOSING HELARE

As she turns the page, Annie explains her meaning to the children around her. "Hilary is only one year old so that's why we kept on losing her. We lost her under the tablecloth."

Annie knows this information is important, yet she doesn't put it in her book. She considers only her present audience, the people who are alongside her during the writing process. She doesn't distance into the future and imagine her writing as a product or her readers as separate from herself.

Annie's classmates will hear her story and ask, "Who's Hilary?" Annie will explain her writing, and later, as she sits at the round conference table with her teacher, she will be encouraged to add information to her story.

Before long Annie will consider the needs of an audience while she's writing. Her classmate, Laura, has begun to internalize her audience. While Laura writes she holds an internal dialogue with an audience. She writes,

MY FAMILY LIKES PEANUT BATTR

Laura knows the other children will say, "Why do they like peanut butter? You have to tell us why," and so Laura mutters to herself, "I already told you why." When Laura writes,

AND I PLAYED A GAME

she says, "Oh-oh, they're going to kill me," and erases *game*. She writes the specific game, "Aggravation."

AGOUSHON

Few professional writers share Laura's constant audience awareness. Most writers need time to write for the play of it. We hope Laura will re-learn to write for herself as well as for readers. John Ciardi describes the writer's craft by saying:

> The last act . . . of writing must be to become one's own reader. It is, I suppose, a schizophrenic process. To begin passionately and to end critically, to begin hot and to end cold; and, more important, to try to be passion-hot and critic-cold at the same time.

## Writing Becomes Less Playful

The onset of conventions is often an early indication that children regard their writing as an entity which exists after the writing process is finished.

Young children put emphasis into their writing for the play of it rather than for communication sake. They may darken important words or put them in capitals. A young child darkens the *pull* of a fishing line. The emphasis is not for an audience, nor is it deliberate. The memory is exciting and so the child's arm moves in big strokes.

Later, this child may ask, "What punctuation do I use to make them read this loud?" Punctuation can tell a distant audience how to read a passage, when to pause, where to raise their voices, which words to emphasize. When children begin to view writing as product as well as process, they will differentiate the immediate expressive quality of speech and the more autonomous, distanced mode of written text. Children will want writing to communicate to a distant audience. This may lead to a new concern for conventions and correctness.

The child's emerging concern with "the correct way" shows development toward a broader time frame. Peter spells a word and then rereads it. He shifts his perspective from speller to reader. He straddles more than one perspective, more than one time and space frame. He is aware not only of a distant audience but also of a distant ideal—that is, the right punctuation, the right spelling, the right cursive letter.

During this stage of their development, children try out rules and experiment with formalities of print. Seven-year-old Peter numbers his pages and puts a period after each number. "I saw it in a book that way," he explains. Other late first graders make two menus for their play restaurant. One is in "curlicue" for adults, and one is in print for the kids.

Six-year-old Ben adds *s*'es through his story.

"I liked the way you put an *s* on for two rabbits," his teacher said.

"Yup," Ben answers. He glows with pride. "One *s* for two rabbits, two *s*'es for three rabbits."

The child's concern with being right does not always lead to the inventiveness and discovery which Ben shows. Annie's mother came to school late in the year and said, "I used to wish Annie would try to be neat. Now I want the opposite." The night before, Annie decided to write her Daddy a letter. "Mommy, will you bring me a piece of paper?"

Annie's mother delivered the paper and Annie began to shape carefully the letters, "Dear Daddy." Her pencil slipped. She scrunched the paper up. "Mommy, I need a new piece." Again Annie carefully began to write the heading to her letter. Again she was dissatisfied. This continued for half an hour. Annie never got past her greeting.

One day while Donald Graves was video-taping a six-year-old, the child began to try cursive for the first time. She worked earnestly at her curling letters until a classmate interrupted her. "You shouldn't do cursive yet," the child said to the young writer. "The teacher hasn't showed you yet. You might do it wrong." The writer's first steps toward cursive were stymied by the rule-conscious orthodoxy of her classmate. Next time this writer may not venture into new territory for fear of being wrong. The ability to look ahead to an eventual audience can ruin a child's playful experiments.

### Concern with Audience

For Annie, Sarah, and Alex, writing isn't play anymore. They know they have an audience, and knowing this has spoiled their play. Now when Alex spells his words, he puts his letters side by side so they can be read. He keeps his battles little. He doesn't want his drawings to explode into a scrawl. No longer do the children write for the sheer play of it. They write to communicate; they write to perform.

The young child who once used dark bold print simply because he remembered the pull of the fishing line now carefully adds exclamation marks and hopes an audience will read it right. For the sake of their audience, children try to choose exciting story topics. "I'm going to write an adventure story," Chris announces. "The kids like adventure stories." In one third grade room children select topics by listing alternatives and then asking their classmates to vote. Fads spread through third-grade classrooms, where children seem especially audience conscious. Dialogue, sound words (Boom! Ouch!), exclamation marks and favorite topics spread like wildfire. Researcher Susan Sowers suggests that a sociogram of third and fourth grade classrooms might explain some of the topics and techniques children use. She suggests that asking children questions such as "What three children would you choose as readers for your piece?" might locate the children in the room who have strong influence.

The child at this stage may show developing ability to write for an audience, to view work as a product, and to see it through the eyes of a reader through:

— wanting the paper to be legible
— choosing topics based on audience
— being concerned with correctness and conventions
— anticipating audience response
— using popular techniques
— anticipating audience needs
— looking back on the writing

### Use of Resources

The same time and space changes which contribute to young writers' sense of audience and to their conservatism and concern with correctness can also lead to a new resourcefulness. The child no longer writes in a self-contained cocoon. There is a world out there—a world of resources as well as a world of external judgments, rules and conventions.

Once the child reinvented each word as if it never existed before. Now the same child will say "Chemicals. Chem-i-cals . . . I know that word. It's on my book." And the child darts off to fetch a reading book.

When six-year-old Missy wanted to paste bits of bright tissue paper onto the crayoned tree, her plans were blocked by a shortage of tissue paper. Missy gathered together magic marker and Kleenex, and ripped and colored the Kleenex so as to make her own tissue paper. Missy's invented tissue paper shows a broadening time and space framework. She uses distant materials and she has a sense of controlling time enough to depart from the immediate task of pasting leaves onto her drawing in order to first make tissue paper.

Fetching a spelling word from across the room and gathering materials to make tissue paper are steps toward using reference books, listing information, and interviewing experts. Like a child's early use of resources, these reference skills require the writer to postpone the immediate task of writing in order to tend to a preliminary task. Both require tentativeness, anticipation, planning and pulling together information from disparate perspectives. Reading skills alone do not make children into researchers. Many third graders will dutifully take notes from an encyclopedia and then ignore the notes as they write what they already knew. These children may not have the flexibility and control of time and space which is needed to integrate new information with old, note-taking with reporting.

### Ability to Plan Ahead

A child's developing ability to use resources is often accompanied by a growing ability to plan ahead. Both planning and using resources represent an ability to view present time and space in light of a future and a past. Children show their ability to plan in a number of ways.

The role of drawing often changes as children become more able to plan. The child turns to a clean page and picks up a pencil. Once the question, "What are you going to draw?" would have received the response, "How should I know, I haven't drawed it yet." Now the child instead dictates the words he or she plans to write. "My picture is about 'We had snowman snow,'" the child says, and begins to draw and write according to plan.

Over-planning a piece can force the discovery out of writing. Professional writers know this and most of them let their pencil lead to new images. Gabriel Fielding says, "Writing to me is a voyage, an odyssey, a discovery, because I'm never certain of precisely what I will find." Faulkner describes his writing process this way:

> It begins with a character, usually, and once he stands up on his feet and begins to move, all I do is trot along behind him with a paper and pencil trying to keep up long enough to put down what he says and does.

It is not surprising that when children first develop the ability to plan, they often over-plan. Seven-year-old Scott is convinced that planning everything improves what he has to say.

In an interview at the end of first grade, Scott announced that the first books he'd written aren't as good as his more recent ones. "I hardly didn't have anything in my head," he says about his early books. "I got to the center of the book and thought of all the information I had to go." After Scott wrote his early books, he'd think about them at home, come back and cross things out. Now at the end of first grade, Scott is scornful of this process—not realizing it is the process most professional writers experience.

Scott claims that lately he thinks about his books beforehand and doesn't have to change them. "I think about the title. If I start thinking and get the title, then I think of other things. Once I know everything I'm going to write, the next day I can start writing."

Eventually there will be room for discovery as well as for planning in Scott's writing process. For now, Scott is right to celebrate his new ability to plan. It marks an important step in the progression from play towards craft.

### Is This the Writer's Craft?

For many children, the era of exploration and spontaneity is replaced by one of deliberateness, social consciousness, and conformity. Instead of messing about with words, children practice techniques and follow rules. Instead of letting their pencils lead to new images, children carefully preplan their writing. Instead of reinventing a new sun each time they paint, children learn to make a spiked round sun in the center of their sky. Instead of reliving the fish on their line, children question how to convey excitement to their audience. Children no longer write solely for themselves. Writing is no longer all-process, all-present, all-personal. Children are concerned with product and with audience. Writing has "become conscious of itself as a power of shaping semblances which shall give value for other eyes or ears. . . ." (Gardner 1973, p. 166). Yet, in doing so, writing has lost its playfulness.

### Writing Becomes Craft

> The play impulse becomes the art impulse (supposing it is strong enough to survive the play years) when . . . it becomes conscious of itself as a power of shaping semblances which shall give value for other eyes or ears and shall bring recognition and reknowing. (Gardner 1973, p. 166)

Play becomes art *if the playful impulse is strong enough to survive.* Playfulness is part of craft. To experience the cycle of craft, children need a flexible and controlled time and space framework. They need to shift between writing for the sheer play of it and rewriting for audience, correctness, and clarity.

Nine-year-old Amy expects to write many exploratory drafts. "When I'm on my way to an end, I rush on," Amy explains. "I leave things out. I pretend I'm writing the whole story but then I stop and sometimes throw it out and sometimes change it." Amy's perspective and her process are flexible. Amy knows she can cycle back to a draft and view it from new perspectives, changing what is on the paper.

When Amy wants to become her own reader, she changes her posture and mannerisms. She'll sit up tall, hold the paper away from her face, and mouth each word as she reads it. "I don't really read it silent or aloud," she says. "I read it aloud in my mind." It's not an abstract process for Amy to become her own reader. It's more like playing dress-up.

Amy says, "First you write down how you know it. Then you read it over and you think, 'Can other people understand this?'" As she rereads her draft, she uncovers new memories and images. Amy takes up her pencil and begins to write "like wildfire." Reader becomes writer. Critic becomes participant. And, for awhile, Amy rediscovers the power of explosions that end in a scrawl.

### Summary

Mastery of conventions and concern with audience and final product are part of the process of play becoming craft. But only when the child rediscovers the playful aspects of writing does composing become like the professional writer's. The all-process, all-personal, all-present framework of the young child is part of the writer's cycle of craft. Once rule-conscious, audience-aware children rediscover their playful roots, their writing process becomes qualitatively similar to the process most professional writers experience.

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# RESEARCH UPDATE

## When Children Want to Punctuate: Basic Skills Belong in Context—

Lucy McCormick Calkins

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***National Council of Teachers***
***of English***

*So often punctuation is both taught and studied in isolation from the writing process. What do children actually do with punctuation in the midst of writing? As guest columnist this month, Lucy McCormick Çalkins reports children's understandings and uses of punctuation as well as presents data contrasting a room that teaches punctuation in context vs. a room that teaches it in isolation. Data from this study, funded by the National Institute of Education, are shared in this seventh in a series of research articles about young writers.*

DHG

The recent national concern with writing comes at a bad time. Teachers are stretched too thin. They've already squeezed courses on health, computers, drug abuse and careers into their curriculum. "We've become adept at multiplication and addition," Donald Graves says, "and we've forgotten all about subtraction and division." It's no wonder teachers are asking, "Where am I to get the time—and the energy—to teach writing?"

What teachers don't realize is that writing brings energy into the curriculum. The urge to tell leads children to struggle with punctuation and language mechanics. "I want to publish my mini-bike report. Will you help me make it perfect?" "How can I make the wicked robot groan and yell?" When children write, they reach for the skills they need.

When children ask the questions and raise the dilemmas, skills are learned in context. But this requires a pace which is qualitatively different from most of American education. "I like working on my pieces and making them better and better," nine-year-old Andrea says, "But I need to have all the time I want. If a teacher says, 'You have to get this done in a week,' you write fast and don't want to see mistakes or try new things. You're afraid to find that it's not good, not what you wanted."

Young writers need time to run into their own problems, to ask their own questions. Only then can skills be learned in context—for the context is not the subject matter, but the child's question, the child's need.

Writing takes time. And that time has to come from somewhere else in the curriculum. At Atkinson Academy, a public school in rural New Hampshire, teachers at every grade level take time from formal language instruction and give it to writing.

"Letting go of the drills and workbook exercises felt like a gamble," Ms. Beth Hoban says. "I was scared my third graders wouldn't learn mechanics." But Ms. Hoban believed the only way to find what writing could do was to give it time—lots of time. "We wrote for an hour a day, three days a week," she says.

Ms. West—the teacher across the hall—didn't take the writing gamble. She continued to teach language mechanics through daily drills and workbook exercises. "I start at the very beginning, teaching them simple sentences, periods, capitals," she explains. "Everything that is in the book, I do a whole lesson on it." Ms. West writes sentences on the chalkboard and asks her children to insert missing punctuation. She makes dittos on question marks and gives pre-tests and post-tests on periods. Her children rarely write.

Both teachers say, "I begin at the very beginning." For Ms. West, the beginning is the declarative sentence and the rules of using periods. For Beth Hoban, the beginning is the child's information, the child's desire to be seen and heard. Both teachers believe in basic skills. One teaches them in isolation, the other teaches them in context.

Ms. Hoban's gamble paid off. Because her children invented and used punctuation for their own purposes, they learned it more affectively than if they were doing drills, workbook exercises, and language lessons.

Researcher Lucy Calkins documented this. For a year, she observed Hoban's children each day while they wrote. She also interviewed all the children in Ms. Hoban's and Ms. West's classrooms.

"Do you like punctuation?" "What's it good for?" Calkins asked children from both rooms. Then she showed each child fourteen different kinds of punctuation. "What's this for?" she asked as she drew a semi-colon, an apostrophe.

The third grade "writers" who had not

had formal instruction in punctuation could define/explain an average of 8.66 kinds of punctuation. The children who had studied punctuation through classwork, drills and tests, but had rarely written, were only able to define/explain 3.85 kinds of punctuation.

### Writers Need Punctuation: Their Audience

"Will you read my fishing piece," Alan says to his friend. "I want to put it in a book." They pull their chairs up to a desk in the back of the room. Jennie falters as she begins to read the story. "Read it better," Alan says. "Come on . . . when they talk, read it out, like conversation." But Jennie can't, not without punctuation. So they find a red pencil and put commas and quotation marks into the draft.

Later, Alan sends a copy of his fishing story to the school paper, and he puts the final draft on display, along with his fishing gear. Children in Beth Hoban's classroom know their writing will be read by classmates, and they want it to be clear. "If you want your story to make sense, you can't write without punctuation," Alan says now. "Punctuation tells people things—like if the sentence is asking, or if someone is talking, or if you should yell it out."

Chip agrees. Readers need punctuation. "It lets you know where the sentence ends, so otherwise one minute you'd be sledding down the hill and the next minute you're inside the house, without even stopping."

In the first grade at Atkinson, where children also write and write for each other, it is often their sense of audience which prompts them to use punctuation. For young children, writing usually begins as a kind of egocentric play. They write for the sheer fun of it, with no thought to an eventual audience. Children at this stage aren't much interested in punctuation. Later, as they become aware of their audience, they begin to look over their print, asking, "Will they be able to read this?" Six-year-old Becky watched two boys peer down at her page.

"What's this say?", they asked.

Becky had run her words together, without leaving spaces between them. Now she adds dashes to separate words. Oftentimes young writers use punctuation for unorthodox reasons. No one corrected Becky's use of the dash. Adult mistakes are often a child's step. Becky's teacher encourages children to experiment with punctuation, to solve their own problems. Later, if Becky doesn't stop separating words with dashes, her teacher will suggest she leave spaces instead of dashes.

Third graders, like younger children, often misuse punctuation when they first use it. "I never take points off for it," Beth Hoban says. "I want them to try new things, to solve their own problems."

Children in the writing classrooms connect punctuation with writing and with reading each other's writing. And they like it.

Fewer than twenty-five percent of the children in the "mechanics" classroom like punctuation. "Punctuation is embarrassing," one nine-year-old in this class says. "I'd like it if I were good at it, but I'm not," a classmate adds. "You forget what it's for," a third says.

Writers don't forget what punctuation is for. It is for their audience, and it is for their voice.

### Writers Need Punctuation: Their Voice

Print is a silent language. Children want to give voice to their stories. They want their print to speak out loud. Very young children often put expression into their print by darkening important syllables or capitalizing some words for emphasis.

When six-year-old Brad put the word *pull* in his story, he went back to the word and carefully darkened each of the letters.

"Why did you do that?", Don Graves asked.

Brad looked up at him. "Because I want them to know to really PULL!"

But young children soon find that patches and strings of big and small, loopy and tight letters do not translate into the lilt of a reader's voice. Amy's friend squints and struggles over Amy's dinosaur story. Amy sees this, and hears her faltering version of the tale. How can she make her friend's voice hang, expectantly, before a list of dinosaur names? How can she direct the voice to *crash*? How can she make it soften and grow harsh?

Step by step, Amy begins to learn conventional markers which communicate the inflection and pace of her voice. Now she says, "Punctuation sounds good. I mean, it doesn't have a sound like a letter has a sound, but it makes all the letters sound better. If writing had no punctuation, it would sound dull."

Tracey adds, "Punctuation can show your feelings. You can show feelings with punctuation, or with words, or with both." Tracey uses exclamation marks to show happiness and excitement. She learned them from her classmate, Peter. Exclamations traveled like wildfire throughout Hoban's class. One child brought them in, and soon most of the children were using them. At last they had a substitute for the tall heavy letters they had used as first graders to show important words.

These are some of the children's explanations for exclamation marks:

Wendy: Use them when you want it expressed out. They tell you were surprised.

Shawn: It makes a louder sound. It is like a demand, an order.

Diane: It changes the way people read the words. They read them faster. It's like an action word. Run! Quick!

Exclamations also spread quickly throughout the first grade at Atkinson. One six-year-old says, "They mean you are happy, like it's your birthday." Other first graders called them a "surprised mark," "a excited mark." Six-year-old Sharon confessed, "I don't use them much because my books aren't exciting."

Quotation marks, like exclamations, are popular with writers. They, too, give voice to print. Even first graders want their characters to talk like real people. One six-year-old put comic strip balloons around spoken sections in her stories until her teacher taught her the conventional way to show quotations.

A curriculum guide does not tell Ms. Gerry when her first graders are ready for punctuation. Instead she follows the children. "When their characters begin to talk, I show the children quotations," she says.

Third grade writers use quotations easily. "You use quotations to tell it in a different voice," Wendy says. "And quotations make it shorter. Usually if you want to tell something is being said, it is quickest and shortest to just put it into quotes."

More than half of Ms. Hoban's class used the sound of their writing to explain periods. Chip says, "As you read along in what you've written, you listen to your voice and when it gets lower, that's where you put the period in."

Forty-seven percent of the explanations *writers* gave for punctuation referred to the way it affects the pace and inflection of language. Only nine percent of the *nonwriters'* definitions referred to this.

## Writers Go Beyond Titles

When children write, they care less about the official rules and names for punctuation marks than about how they are used. When six-year-old Jennice used quotation marks, a researcher asked her, "What's that?"

"Um, ah, oh, that thing, you know . . ." was her response.

"Well, when do you use them?" she was asked.

Jennice had a ready answer. "When they talk," she said. "You know, when they say things."

The non-writers rarely gave operational definitions. Instead, they described punctuation by trying to remember the rules they had been taught. Ms. West's class knew periods come at the end of a sentence. But when the researcher asked them where to end a sentence, they didn't know. "You can tell where to end it by the period," was all they could say. One boy had mastered the tricks of the trade. He suggested that you look to see if a capital letter comes next, and if so, insert the period. The boy will do well on third grade achievement tests. Probably many of his classmates will, as well. But drills on missing punctuation have little carry-over into writing.

Jack learned commas are for lists of people—Joe, Frank, Peter. "Anywhere else?", the researcher asked. "Sometimes when you paint," Jack said. "Different colors—purple, green, blue." Then he added, "But nowhere else." Many of the "mechanics" students defined commas by referring to one specific use only. "Put it in between fruit." "Commas separate states."

The writers didn't refer to rules, but to their writing. Amy explains commas this way:

> If you have a long sentence and you want to keep it all there, you put a comma in to take a breath. If you were to make a new sentence, you'd change it up. One example is my flying piece of writing. I said. "We got a little lower and over the beach, I saw tiny colored dots."
>
> Before and after the commas, they are both parts of the same sentence. Like the first half of the sentence is one paragraph, and the other half is the second paragraph . . . like two edges of the same idea.

Amy has learned punctuation in context. She has learned more than rules. She is developing an intuitive sense for the nuances of punctuation.

### Why Writers Need Punctuation: They Write Well

In September, Beth Hoban's students only needed an average of 2.22 different kinds of punctuation to correctly punctuate a piece of writing, and they used an average of 1.25 different kinds. They wrote mostly simple sentences, without dialogue, sound effects, supportive information, or exclamations.

Since then, the children have learned to make their writing more colorful, more varied. They include special effects in their writing. "I keep putting in new kinds of punctuation," eight-year-old Andrea says, "because I need them. Like sound effects—it takes wierd punctuation to put *thud-thud* or *splat*! onto my paper."

Steven tried several kinds of punctuation to accompany the ring of his alarm clock. First he wrote *Rrrrrr*! He erased it. "That sounds too sudden, like it ends too quickly," he explained. Steven's final draft reads, "Rrrrr . . . the alarm blasted on and on in my room." Since then Steven has used three dots several times. "To me it means one, two, three minutes went by."

By February, Ms. Hoban's children needed an average of 5.62 different kinds of punctuation in order for their writing to be correctly punctuated, and they used an average of five different kinds in one piece.

### Why Writers Punctuate: They Revise

Ms. Hoban's children use carets, asterisks, and dashes to move words about on the page. Like professional writers, they use their drafts as working manuscripts. They put words on the paper in order to get their hands on them.

When nine-year-old Susie finishes her two-page story about finding a skunk in the garbage can, she says, "Now I'll fix it up—take out some parts and add." For a few minutes, she rereads her draft. "I think I'll fix the whole story up," she says, "not just parts." This time when Susie rereads, she circles sections which especially need work. She circles this section, her beginning:

> Last night I accompanied my sister to empty the garbage. She started emptying the garbage while I was playing on the lawn. All of a sudden she shrieked, "skunk." My sister ran by. I started running too.

Susie retraces the pencil circle. "On my next draft, I'll really fix that up," she says. "I'll put in more detail." This is Susie's next draft:

> The sky was full of stars, so I decided to join my sister while she emptied the garbage. When I got out on the grass I started playing around. I was doing cartwheels and summersaults. I heard a shriek. "Skunk!" Jill yelled. All of a sudden the night seemed very scary. The dark shadows of big trees crept onto the yard. I did not want to be out there with a skunk.

This time, Susie rereads with pencil in hand. Each word is reconsidered, rechosen. "After I do the big stuff, I do each word," Susie explains. With a caret, she inserts her sister's name into the first sentence. She reads it out loud.

> . . . I decided to join my sister, Jill, while she emptied the garbage.

"Now I can just use her name, later on.", Susie says. She reads the next line outloud.

> . . . When I got on the grass I started playing around. I was doing cartwheels and summersaults.

Her pencil paused over the phrase, "I started playing around." "Do I need this?", she whispered to herself. The phrase was slashed, two sentences became one, and a comma was added. Now Susie adds a paragraph sign before "All of a sudden the night seemed . . ."

"I have to work a long, long time on a little section if I want it to be perfect.", she says. Susie needs punctuation in order to consolidate and expand her sentences, to adjust her words, and to change her sequences. She uses asterisks, colons, carets, parentheses—punctuation marks that are often not "taught" until the middle school years.

These lists show the number of children from each of the two third grades who correctly described each type of punctuation:

| Writing Class (total = 18) | |
|---|---|
| period | 18 |
| exclamation mark | 16 |
| question mark | 16 |
| apostrophe | 14 |
| paragraph sign | 13 |
| dash | 12 |
| caret | 11 |
| quotation marks | 11 |
| comma | 10 |
| colon | 8 |
| parentheses | 7 |
| asterisk | 7 |
| semi-colon | 1 |

| Mechanics Class (total = 16) | |
|---|---|
| period | 13 |
| question mark | 10 |
| exclamation mark | 8 |
| parentheses | 7 |
| apostrophe | 4 |
| dash | 4 |
| comma | 3 |
| quotation marks | 2 |
| semi-colon | 0 |
| asterisk | 0 |
| colon | 0 |
| caret | 0 |
| paragraph sign | 0 |

Children from both classes prefer exclamation marks, dashes, and apostrophes, to commas. Teachers think commas are a simple, basic kind of punctuation, but writers and non-writers, both, find them elusive.

The order of the two lists is similar. But writers know many more types of punctuation.

### How Writers Learn Punctuation

When children need punctuation in order to be seen and heard, they become vacuum cleaners, sucking up odd bits from books, their classmates' papers, billboards, and magazines. They find punctuation everywhere, and make it their own.

Six-year-old Casey doesn't know his consonant blends or all of his vowel sounds yet, but he uses exclamation marks. He brings his paper to his teacher.

THE BAD GI! FOS FVD WS TO SONK!

They read, "The bad guys' force field was too strong." Ms. Gerry is surprised. "Where did you learn these?", she asks, pointing to the exclamation marks.

Casey isn't sure. He thinks he found them on a friend's paper. "It makes it sound more scarrier," he says. "You put them after a word, any word."

Even if writers have never used a mark of punctuation, they are usually familiar with it. Shawn recognized the colon. "My Dad uses them in his writing," he says. "But one thing; I can't read his writing."

Melissa nods at the sight of the ellipsis. "Those three periods; people use them at the end of paragraphs. But I usually just use one period."

Across the hall, the mechanics students were baffled and amazed at many of the punctuation marks. "Are those English?", they asked, "I've never seen half of them." They hadn't seen them because they had no use for them.

When children need punctuation they not only see it, they remember what they see. On April 9th, first grader, Chris, used a comma in a series. He wrote:

I went through prickers, over boulders and other junk.

Later the researcher asked Chris' teacher when she'd taught him the comma. "I didn't," she said, and then looked back over her records to be sure. She found that on the seventeenth of January, Chris had been working at the conference table while she showed two other children how to use commas. Now, three months later, the seven-year-old had used what he learned that day through eavesdropping.

When Ms. Gerry reads Chris' story, she will respond first to the content. She will listen to Chris' description of the trail, and ask what "other junk" refers to. Only later does she look at punctuation.

She admires Chris' commas, and helps him with quotations. They find missing periods and question marks, so she sends him off to reread his paper and correct it. "You've got a terrific story here," she says. "It's worth working on."

Writer becomes editor. Chris reads his words outloud, listening to his voice. Line by line, word by word, he scrutinizes his page. "Real writers have a boss who tells them what to do and where to put punctuation," the young writer says. "But I have to do it myself."

Chris is glad to go over his page, making it perfect. He knows what he has to say is important. And punctuation is part of what he has to tell.

# RESEARCH UPDATE

## One Child, One Teacher, One Classroom: The Story of One Piece of Writing—Barbara Kamler

**Donald H. Graves**

*for the Committee on Research, National Council of Teachers of English*

*What is the full context of one piece of writing? Seldom do we get the detail of the many factors having influence on one child's written selection. Barbara Kamler, guest columnist this month, is a lecturer at Riverina College of Advanced Education, Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, Australia. She spent one half year observing children in a second grade classroom in Atkinson, New Hampshire, the site of our research on children's writing funded by the National Institute of Education. This is the eighth in a series of research articles about young writers.*

*D. H. G*

Jill was in a slump. She was stuck for a good topic to write about. Her teacher Judy Egan knew it. The last two topics Jill chose had not worked. She was not interested in "The Day I Changed My Room Around" and she knew nothing about "Cats." The result: two stories lacking in detail and interest for both reader and writer. In the writing conference Jill did not respond to her teacher's questions about content. She had little information to add to either piece. At the conclusion of the conference, the soft-spoken woman broached the issue of topic by first empathizing with Jill's problem:

Mrs. E.: It really is easier to write if you have a lot of information about a topic. I can tell in your book that you've had a little bit of difficulty describing things because you don't really have a cat to watch. It would be very easy for me to write this book Cats because I have a cat and I could watch it all the time.
Jill: (mournfully) I can't.
Mrs. E.: That's right, you can't. I can tell you'd really like to have a cat though. That's rather obvious to me.

Together, child and teacher brainstormed writing topics. They talked about what had been happening at home for Jill. They consulted the inside left cover of Jill's writing folder for "Some New Ideas to Write About" and found the following list:

1) Washington, D.C.
2) Florida
3) Hershey Park
4) My Bird

When Jill showed the most interest in talking about her bird, Gus, Egan followed her lead, exploring the possibilities of the topic and stressing the potential contribution to Jill's readers: "How many people in this room do you think would know what a cockateil is?" It then came out that Jill already had written about this topic in September. Egan proposed that Jill write the new book without consulting the old, so that when she completed it, she could compare the two to see her improvement. Jill was excited by the challenge. She squealed that she could definitely make this book better.

Egan knew her seven-year-old writer well. She is a sensitive observer of the twenty-one children in her second grade classroom at Atkinson Academy, a public school in rural New Hampshire. Egan watches to learn how these children change over time in their writing processes. Because she observes, she is responsive. I entered this responsive environment in January 1980 to study children's writing processes. This paper describes the full context in which one child developed one piece of writing; more accurately, it follows the learning and teaching processes that allowed one piece of writing to evolve.

I had observed Jill for a week before her conference about her cockateil. I was as excited as Jill and anticipated the growth I would see in her as a writer. I went to the master file where Egan maintains a collection of all the children's writing and drafts from entry on the first day of school to the end of the year, and found Jill's five-page illustrated September edition of her bird book.

| *JILL'S TEXT* | *EGAN'S TRANSCRIPTION** |
|---|---|
| *Ear Brid On My Mtethr Anivrsire* | *Our Bird on My Mother's Anniversary* |
| 1) We got a bird for my moms and Tom anivrsire. it is il difnt cilrs. my sistr rathr have a hoos. and i rathr have a bipe | We got a bird for my mom's and Tom's anniversary. It is all different colors. My sister would rather have a horse. I'd rather have a puppy |
| 2) ear bird wacs me up. he wisil to mich | Our bird wakes me up. He whistles too much |

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*The child's words are copied into adult spelling to help Egan remember the exact message

| | |
|---|---|
| 3) we gat youst to it. he is a cokit. You no how theu ear. | We got used to it. He is a cockateil. You know how they are. |
| 4) He stass on top of the dor or he stas on hes cag | He stays on top of the door or he stays on his cage. |
| 5) Abou the author<br>it is a chro store I like to sce<br>I like scri his neam is Gus | About The Author<br>This is a true story. Jill likes to ski and she likes school.<br>Jill's bird's name is Gus. |

That was September. It was now March. Jill had her topic, chose her writing materials and began her new book on March 6, completing it the morning of March 7. Dark head resting on left elbow, nose two inches from the page, she wrote in rapid bursts, with frequent stops in between. She held her pencil loosely; it seemed to float across the page. She made two trips into the hall and continually shuffled the papers in her writing folder. I observed no signs of concentration. She paid little attention to spelling and handwriting, much attention to interruptions. Twenty minutes after she had begun, this brown-eyed, elfish child stood abruptly. She closed the cover of her unlined book, returned her pencil to the orange caddy that held all writing implements, went to the window sill and placed her book in an orange bucket labelled "Ready for a Conference." She then placed her writing folder in the orange bucket marked "Writing Folders." She returned to the work board and paused. She considered going into either the pretend area to work on the maple syrup project or the art area to complete her kite, but finally decided on the listening area. She moved her name tag from "Writing" to "Listening," and settled into a Robert McCloskey tape of *Blueberries for Sal*.

I was stunned. Was that it? The writer I had just observed seemed careless and disinterested, scribbling words quickly in order to be done with it. I needed to check my perception against her draft. I took her book from the conference bucket and read the following story:

DRAFT I March 7

*My Bird on My Mom's and Tom's Anivesire*

Page 1) My Bide is a coktel He cherps all day. Chip
(My bird is a cockateil. He chirps all day. Chirp.)[*]

2) A coktel is funny looking They look a libt bit like .
(A cockateil is funny looking. They look a little bit like . . .)

3) I made a mestake on Pacg the 2
(I made a mistake on this page 2.)

4) My sestr rather have a hows insted.
(My sister would rather have a horse instead.)

5) I love my bird

6) My brid side to saye good By.
(My bird said to say, "Goodbye.")

7) The
n
d

It did not look promising. There was no detail, nothing of interest about the bird. I looked at the September version which was certainly more legible and coherent; it contained more information and the handwriting was more controlled. Discouraged, I was reduced to counting words—fifty-seven words in March, eighty-eight words in September. Words like *lazy* and *careless* came to mind—skimpy and general. I was negative and could only see what the story was not and what the child had not done.

Judy Egan, on the other hand, did not treat the piece as a final product. She was as unimpressed as I by the content and aware that the book had not been reread or checked so that it was ready for a conference. But she was not negative. The book in the conference bucket was not there to be evaluated and marked. It was there to be conferenced, listened to, developed. Egan's process of teaching makes room for each child's process of writing. She provides a structure for the young learner's efforts, yet leaves room for the individual's style and pace.

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[*] I have transcribed Jill's text for ease of reading

The whole classroom is structured to this end. The room is divided into independent learning areas—listening, writing, reading, pretend, blocks, science, math. Egan spends time introducing and familiarizing the children with the self-directed activities in each of the areas. Through conference and share sessions she helps children learn how to use the learning materials wisely and responsibly. There is a depth of activity for children to be involved in, an organization which encourages independent choice. She is a teacher who believes in responsible choice and responsible action.

Consistent with this external structure, there is a writing process structure which is part of the internal organization of the classroom. When children complete a piece of writing, they are scheduled for individual writing conferences. In a conference, the teacher listens to a child read and together they work on the content and skills. The teacher keeps a log of the conference. When four stories have been completed and conferenced, the child chooses one for publication. In a small group conference, child writers react to one another's chosen piece and then work on the final revision of their own piece. After the book is typed by a parent volunteer, the child completes the publishing cycle by illustrating each page, binding the wallpapered cardboard book cover and sharing the published book with the whole class. The book is then added to the collection of stories in the classroom library.

Jill's bird book was the third of her current publishing cycle, and one she eventually chose to publish. During the publishing cycle that I observed, Jill wrote and revised four books and two poems, she participated in eight writing conferences and shared two published books with the whole class. The time table below indicates only the chronology of processes directly related to her bird book.

March 6 - Begins composing *My Bird on My Mom's and Tom's Anniversary.*

March 7 - Completes composing.

March 11 - Conference with Debbie (a peer). Makes Draft II revisions.

March 11 - Conference with Egan. Makes Draft III revisions.

March 13 - Skills conference with Egan. Makes Draft IV revisions.

March 21 - Group Conference. Makes Draft V revisions.

March 24 - Illustrates book. Binds book.

March 25 - Shares book with whole class. Book enters class library.

On March 11, Jill was one of six children scheduled for a writing conference. The morning began as usual with all the children planning their morning activities on the rug. Some went to the pretend corner to work on their puppet show, others to the library and reading area, and a third group to the writing table. At Egan's direction, Jill and the other conferees went to the language table. Egan had requested that Jill first spend time with seven-year-old Debbie going over the book to be sure it was ready for a conference. Debbie and Jill were friends and knew each other well. Egan hoped this peer conference, like the three others going on at the same time in the room, would help Jill add more information and provide groundwork for the teacher-child conference to follow.

The girls were confident and seemed to know how to proceed; certainly they had

had excellent, consistent modeling from their teacher. Jill began by reading each page aloud to Debbie. Removed from the piece for four days, Jill's eyes became more critical. She had trouble deciphering some of her content and later confided to Egan, "Me and Debbie couldn't even understand it!", to which her non-judgmental teacher replied, "You're kidding! You wrote it and you couldn't understand it! That happens."

As Jill listened to her own words, she made changes on pages 1, 2, and 3 without any prompting or comment from Debbie, and on pages 4, 5, and 8 in direct response to questions Debbie asked. The draft below focuses on the relationship between the content of this writing conference and Jill's subsequent activity in changing the draft. In every case throughout the process, Jill made all changes on the original March 7 draft: she never recopied the whole story. I have shown all changes from Draft I by writing them in by hand.

At the conclusion of this half hour conference, Jill had made six content changes which affected the overall meaning of the piece. She had deleted information which made no sense or which she could not support; she added information to clarify or explain. Debbie's presence was crucial to the content revisions of the draft. Her physical presence forced Jill to reread the book for the first time since composing; Debbie seemed to make the concept of audience visible for Jill. Jill also needed an active reader to ask questions. Debbie was attentive and encouraging; when Jill showed her the page-four revisions, Debbie giggled and made quick little claps for her friend. Jill was

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DRAFT II    March 11

*My Bird on My Mom's and Tom's Anivesire*

| *JILL'S TEXT AFTER CONFERENCE* | *CONFERENCE QUESTIONS AND BEHAVIORS* |
|---|---|
| Page 1) *My bide is a coktel*<br>*He cherps all day Chip* Chip . | *Debbie does not comment or ask questions. Jill makes these changes as she goes along reading each page.* |
| 2) *A coktel is funny looking*<br>*They look* nothing *like* this | |
| 3) ~~*I made a mastake on Peeg the 2*~~ | |
| 4) *My sestr rather have a hows insted*<br>bcis the bid crips well<br>we are wiching t.v. | D: *My sister rather have a horse. Why is that there?*<br>J:. *Because the bird chirps while we're watching t.v.* |
| 5) ~~*I love my bird*~~— | D: *Why do you love your bird?*<br>J: *Because . . . I don't know why I love my bird. (Crosses out sentence.)* |
| 6) *My brid side to saye good By.* | |
| 7) *The*<br>*n*<br>*d* | |
| 8) Aobt the Ater<br>My bird is name Gus<br>has name is rele<br>Agstis | D: *Are you going to put about the author? (The last page of each book contains a statement about the author that is written by the child.)* |

open to her suggestions, never defensive. She was in control, choosing to respond to some of Debbie's questions, to ignore others. She shared some of her problems in writing the book—"I had pictures but I scribbled them out because they're awful"—and tried to keep the focus on her own work—"Come on, Debbie, we're supposed to be doing mine."

Four days earlier, Jill had dumped the story in the conference bucket without looking back. Now she seemed to be reclaiming responsibility for the piece. When she had completed the content changes, she attended to her proofreading duties. "I have to check everything on my folder," she told Debbie as she consulted the list of "Things Jill Can Do." The list was compiled in conferences by Jill and her teacher when both noted that a particular skill was used successfully:

1) Put title on folder
2) Put title on book
3) Put date
4) Put first and last name
5) Number pages
6) Use periods
7) Use ?
8) Use Part I and Part II
9) Use "too"
10) Use "er" like in brother

She went through her story systematically checking each page against the list on her folder. She saw no further changes to make and announced loudly: "Ready for a conference!" It was Jill speaking, but I heard the now internalized voice of her teacher, patiently asking each child at the beginning of each conference: "Are you ready for a conference? Have you checked the back of your folder to be sure you are ready?"

Jill put her story in the teacher's conference log and placed it on the corner of Egan's child-sized conference table, especially ordered because it is small, private and conducive to focusing attention. Jill went to her cubby for a piece of cake, then to the window where she and Debbie shared the cake, talking, laughing, arms around each other. Then Debbie claimed her time: "O.K., Jill, you help me now!" They reversed roles, returned to the language table to work on Debbie's book, *Ice Follies*, until Mrs. Egan was ready to see Jill twenty minutes later.

Jill was proud to report the results of her conference with Debbie, "I had six things to change and she had four." With one arm resting on the back of Jill's chair, Egan shared the child's enthusiasm: "Wow! Six things! I'd like to see what they are! Read it to me and tell me about the changes you've made." This was Jill's second writing conference that morning, her teacher's fourth. Egan began positively, as always, accepting the child and her piece of work as something valuable, something she had worked hard on, something worth listening to. She affirmed what the child could do, then shifted to areas of weakness.

The problem: a skimpy story about a bird named Gus. The focus: how to get the child to add information. The result: a thirty minute conference. Egan didn't know the conference would last this long when she began. She did know that Jill was in a slump and that time spent on developing content would be worthwhile; she did know her room, at this time of year, was capable of running itself. When she saw the fruits of the conference, she knew from previous experience that the time spent was justified, the effects for Jill long lasting.

Egan began the conference by intensively probing the content with Jill. She was at first very directive. Egan asked many questions about the bird's physical appearance, his habitat, his diet. For ten minutes she controlled the discussion, pushing Jill to talk about her bird Gus. She took the role of naive reader, one who knew nothing about the bird, when in fact

Egan did know about the bird and Jill knew it. This was a conscious decision on her part. She believes Jill enjoys the back and forth bantering, the parley. Jill's replies were abbreviated; if anything, Egan did more talking. The interchange was quick, punctuated by laughter, high spirits and Jill's occasional exasperation.

**Mrs. E:** Where do you keep a cockateil?
**Jill:** In a cage!
**Mrs. E:** Like Munchkin? (resident guinea pig)
**Jill:** No. A bird cage.
**Mrs. E:** Oh! A bird cage!
**Jill:** You know that! (exasperated)
**Mrs. E:** But if I were a person who didn't know what a cockateil was, I might be confused by that.
**Jill:** Mmmm. (tolerant)
**Mrs. E:** Think now, Jill, about Gus. Does he always stay in the cage?
**Jill:** No.
**Mrs. E:** No?
**Jill:** Of course not! He got *bit* by the dog!
**Mrs. E:** You're kidding! The dog bit him?
**Jill:** Yeah! He ate one of the feathers and then threw up. (voice becoming higher and more animated)
**Mrs. E:** Oh, no! So Gus gets out of the cage on purpose. Do you let him out? Or is it a mistake?
**Jill:** No! The dog comes in the den, and now he knows not to come in when the bird's on the floor.
**Mrs. E:** Now let me get this straight. The bird comes out of the cage because you want it to come out of the cage. You open the door?
**Jill:** He has a choice.
**Mrs. E:** You mean he knows how to open the door?
**Jill:** No, we open the door!
**Mrs. E:** Alright. You ask Gus if he wants to come out and if he does he comes out of the door.
**Jill:** No. It's his choice.
**Mrs. E:** So you just leave the door open and he . . .
**Jill:** (not letting her finish) YEAH!

For ten minutes they discussed details of the bird in this manner. Then it was time for Jill to decide what information to add to the book. Egan did not decide. She guided Jill's selection process. The directive teacher began to move back from her position of control so that she could return responsibility for the writing to the child. At the end of the morning Jill had made extensive content additions and developed her story further.

Once again, I have shown all changes from Draft II by writing them in by hand. The relationship between the content of this conference and the changes Jill made in her book is more complex than the relationship described in the peer conference. Excerpts from the conference that are related to Draft III changes are posted in the right-hand column. Note how Egan gradually transfers responsibility to the child in the conference:

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DRAFT III March 11

*My Bird on My Mom's and Tom's Anivesire*

| *JILL'S TEXT AFTER CONFERENCE* | *RELATED CONFERENCE DIALOGUE* |
|---|---|
| Page 1) My bide is a coktel He cherps all day "Chip Chip."<br>(My bird is a cockateil. He chirps all day. "Chirp Chirp.") | |
| 2) A coktel is funny looking<br>~~They look nothing like this~~<br>bcis he has feters steking up and win he is yiang his fias is gray and win his oldr his feas ges yelur | **Mrs. E:** I know quite a few reasons why this is a funny looking bird. What are some of those reasons?<br>Teacher initiates summing up. Teacher nominates physical appearance of bird as topic, but asks child to recall detail. No prompting. Teacher asks child to make additions to page 2 at conference table. After child rereads additions aloud, teacher asks: "Do you want to leave this sentence, "The bird looks nothing like this?" |

(A cockateil is funny looking because he has feathers sticking up and when he is young his face is grey and when he's older his face goes yellow.)

2a) My bird hade's vidmins in his widr I think it is funne don't you? and his food is sunflowr ses and gafl and parti seds

(My bird has vitamins in his water. I think it is funny don't you? and his food is sunflower seeds and gravel and parrot seeds.)

**Mrs. E:** Alright, Jill, now think of some of the other things we've talked about just now about your cockateil.
**Jill:** Food.
**Mrs. E:** Food. All right. Where would be a good place to fit it in?

Teacher initiates more general revision question. Child nominates food as topic. Teacher does not ask child to recall relevant details. Teacher directs attention to problems of sequence and physical space. Teacher asks child to make additions at conference table.

3) Own fon nite the brid frou out fo the den and the dog bit the bird and the bird din't did but the dog at one of the beds feters and he th up.

(One fine night the bird flew out of the den and the dog bit the bird and the bird didn't die but the dog ate one of the bird's feathers and he threw up.)

**Mrs. E:** Are there any other places you think you need to work on?
**Jill:** I love my bird. I crossed that out because I don't know why I love him.
**Mrs. E:** Think about that for a minute . . . You would be upset if you didn't have your bird.
**Jill:** I know. I know what I could add!
**Mrs. E:** What?
**Jill:** When the dog jumped and *BIT* the bird!

Teacher's open-ended question asks child to take more responsibility. Child decided topic and content detail. She temporarily ignores teacher's question to initiate her own content addition. Child is gaining control. Teacher directs child to language table to make additions independently. Child returns to reread after she completed changes.

4) My sester rather have a hows insted bcis the bid crips well we are wiching t.v.

(My sister rather have a horse instead because the bird chirps while we are watching t.v.)

Child initiates change. Rereads page 2 additions aloud and proclaims:
**Jill:** I put an "er."
**Mrs. E:** I was glad to see you used "er" in "feather." How about on "sister?"

Although teacher directs focus to word "sister," unlikely change would have been made at this time if child had not initiated.

5) I love my brid bcus he is nice to me

(I love my bird because he is nice to me.)

Refer to conference dialogue for page 3 above.

6) My brid side to saye good By
(My bird said to say, "Goodbye.")

7) The
n
d

8) Aobt tho Ater
My bird is name Gus has name is rele Agstis
(About the Author. My bird is named Gus. His name is really Augustus.)

---

Throughout this interchange, Jill depended on Egan as audience to push and help develop the content of the book. As the conference proceeded, she gradually took the initiative, selecting which information she would add. Jill seemed charged by the conference. She proudly showed Debbie her new content additions and then returned to the conference table to wait for her teacher, who had been helping Sean and Andy with dinosaur research in the science corner. Jill's behavior loudly proclaimed that she felt in control. She wrote a quick poem, put it in her writing folder and said: "Another one. Now I'm ready for publishing."

She was on top, but at every step of the way, her teacher helped her gain that sense of control through skillful conferencing. Egan has high expectations: she asks her children to be responsible for their actions and their writing. She always begins with the positive, affirming what the children can do, rather than dwelling on what they can't. She always consults; she asks rather than tells. In this way she guides children to maintain control of their writing and live up to their responsibilities as writers.

The next morning, Judy Egan scheduled a second conference with Jill on the bird book so that she could work with her on some skills in context. Jill began by reading her freshly revised book aloud to her teacher and concluded: "It's better than the first copy because I added more." She made the following corrections/additions at this time:

DRAFT IV March 13

*My Bird on My Mom's and Tom's Aniveaire*

Page 1) My bide is a coktel He cherps all day
~~"Chip Chip."~~
on the door
2) oldr → older
2a) widr → wider
sunflr → sunflower
6) side → said
added " " to goodbye

The conference lasted eighteen minutes. During that time, Jill made only four spelling corrections. The bulk of the conference was devoted to teaching, to revising and reinforcing skills. Egan gave her student time. She sat close to Jill and treated all errors positively: "Look at the word *said*. That's a word you use quite a bit now that you're using quotation marks. You've got many of the letters that are in *said* right here in your word. It does have four letters. Can you hear what comes at the beginning?" As Jill has used contractions, apostrophes and question marks correctly in her book, Egan started there; she spent a lot of time asking Jill to apply her knowledge of contractions to new contexts. Egan's entry into Jill's conference log book that day gives a better sense of what transpired than the changes in the actual draft:

3-13 *My Bird......*
Reinforced *er* on *water, sunflower, older*
Used *er* on *rather, feather, sister*
Sp of *said*

Used *look* correctly—hadn't on spelling test
Used ' on *didn't*. Applied ' to *don't*
Used ?

The last five minutes of the conference were very exciting for Jill. Egan took Jill's September bird book from the master file. The challenge Jill had accepted a week earlier was to make her March bird book better. Now the time for comparison was here. Jill read her earlier work aloud to her teacher. Her reactions to the text made several aspects of her growth and expectations as a writer visible to me.

First, she had great trouble reading the book, particularly deciphering her own spelling. On more than one occasion she abandoned her own words and read her teacher's transcription instead. Amazed, she said, "I don't believe this page . . . I don't believe I spelled *got* that way." Her spelling had changed. So too had her expectations about a book's content. On reading the last page, she turned the book over, said, "Huh?" and looked for another page of information. She was surprised there was no more. She thought the book was short and that there should have been more content, even though her first draft of the current bird book contained less information than the September version. Her concept of writing had changed. Now she treated the initial composing as a first draft, as a frame to hold the barest outline of ideas. She had learned that the conference process would help her fill out that outline and move beyond the bare essentials.

Another look at her September book showed me that Jill had not made content revisions and that her writing was neater, more controlled. Her March book was, by contrast, anything but neat. Jill was very impressed with the messiness of her book. On several occasions she proudly compared it to an earlier book, *Earrings*, which was a breakthrough for Jill in revising, when messy became a positive term associated with change; when how the book looked became less important than what was said. At that point, her words began to flow, her content began to improve.

Holding both books in her hand, she returned to the language table at the peak of control over her writing. When she asked Katy to compare the two books and received an unsatisfactory answer, she proclaimed knowingly: "It has more information. I don't like it. It's not my best. It might have been my best then, but it isn't now." She completed her changes on the book, checked them with Egan, wrote a note to her teacher asking that she assign her to the writing area the following morning, took stock of her writing folder and put a big "NO" on the cover of *Cats*, thus ruling it out for publication. Although she had worked steadily for over an hour, Jill took a new booklet to the writing table and began writing a special publication on author Shel Silverstein.

Eight days later, on March 21, Jill met with Tracey, Andy, and Mrs. Egan for a group publishing conference. Jill had not been idle during the intervening week. She had finished writing another book and participated in one large group conference, one peer conference, and two teacher conferences. Now she and Tracey and Andy were meeting with Mrs. Egan to make their nominated book better. Quality was important; making things better was part of the publishing process. The children were familiar with the structure. They would be asked to tell why their book was the best and why they had chosen it. They would read their books to one another, listening to the feedback they received so they could later decide what final changes to make. In turn, they would be expected to be good listeners, to ask questions of one another, to seek clarification where necessary.

Jill was a very active listener in this conference. She questioned Andy and Tracey about their stories in a demanding and straightforward manner. Like her model, Judy Egan, she did not settle for general responses; she wanted specifics. When she was dissatisfied with an answer from Andy, she was demanding of him: "No. I want to know why he's happy, not why he looks happy." As a recipient of feedback, Jill was more defensive. She firmly defended her text when she felt her information was correct:

**Mrs. Egan:** Tracey, do you think in "About the Author" is the best place for Jill to have that information about Gus' name?
**Tracey:** No.
**Mrs. Egan:** Are you happy with that information being in "About the Author," Jill?
**Jill:** Yes.
**Mrs. Egan:** Why did you put it there instead of putting it in the actual story?
**Jill:** Because I usually do that because it's going to wreck the book if I say, "My bird is named Augustus but his name . . .," so I put it in "About the Author."
**Tracey:** You could say why you call him Gus now and Augustus later.
**Jill:** I want it in the author!

Although not always open to questions or comments from Tracey or Andy, Jill did listen when she felt a proposed change might add to her book. At the conclusion of the conference, she made these additional content changes:

Jill seemed tired at the end of the conference, perhaps the cumulative exhaustion of adding so much information to her story. She chose a flowered book cover for the book and wandered around the classroom for ten minutes with it tucked under her arm. Then she returned to the window sill, rejected the flower cover and chose instead a more modest gold fleck pattern. She placed her book inside the cover and placed the whole in the orange bucket marked, "Ready for Publishing."

A parent volunteer typed the book over the weekend. On Monday morning, March 24, Judy Egan proudly returned the book to her hardworking writer. Jill looked unsettled. She did not want to illustrate the book. She wanted to go to art to start a new art project. She looked dissatisfied as she reread her book on the rug. She claimed there was a typing error on page six. When Mrs. Egan offered to have the page retyped, Jill declined.

She moved into the hallway to a long rectangular table where she joined Tommy illustrating *Shel Silverstein*, Kim illustrating *My Brother's Scary Attempt For an Accident*, and Hilary writing *My Doll Collection*. I did not expect Jill to take much time with her illustrations. She had used only the barest line drawings on her

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**DRAFT V** **March 21**

*My Bird on My Mom's and Tom's Anivesirc*

Page 3) Own fon nite the brid frou out fo the den and the dog bit the brid and the brid din't did but the dog at one of the beds feters and he th up. The dog side "Grrrrrrrer" at, the bard.

(One fine night the bird flew out of the den and the dog bit the bird and the bird didn't die but the dog ate one of the bird's feathers and he threw up. The dog said, "Grrrrrrer" at the bird.)

8) Aobt the Ater My bird is name Gus Has name is rele Agstis

On my mom's annivrside we got a bard.

(About the Author My bird is named Gus His name is really Augustus. On my mom's anniversary we got a bird.)

first draft, and on a number of occasions during the cycle I had heard her complain about her lack of ability at drawing. The care and detail she gave to her illustrations astounded me. She carefully colored each word in her title with a different colored marker. Her attention to detail on page 1 was meticulous. She portrayed not only the interior of her den with the bird sitting on the door, but also showed the sky, bushes, trees, clouds, sun, and dog house visible through the glass door in the den.

When she stopped to prepare for lunch, she had taken fifty-five minutes to illustrate only the first two pages. The patience she showed in her drawing contrasted directly with her verbal behavior toward the other children at the table. She was aggressive, at times offensive. She called Michael, "Fat Face," because he was using the marker she wanted, to which he replied: "No wonder your sister doesn't let you play with her friends." When Kim accidentally knocked Jill's hand, Jill slammed her hand on the table yelling, "Kim! Kim!," in her most reprimanding tone.

The illustrating was demanding. She began in marker, then wanted to change to colored pencil: "I want to do colored pencils, not markers, 'cause I stink at birds and I stink at couches." But she perceived the change as a problem. She sought counsel from Hilary: "Hilary, do you think if I did this page in marker I could do the rest in colored pencil?," and finally seemed consoled by Hilary's response: "Yeah, it's o.k. I've seen real published books go from pen and ink to watercolor."

Until then, I had observed Jill glorifying mess, never neatness. Now I observed her concentrating, doing careful, detailed work. She was capable of both and knew when each was appropriate for her purposes. But the concentrating seemed to take its toll. I wondered if it had anything to do with her irritability. She completed her illustrations that afternoon.

On March 25 Jill shared her book with the whole class. Her fifty-seven-word first draft of March 7 had grown to 169 words. I have number coded and divided the final typed version of Jill's story to indicate at which point in the writing process Jill added the information (see following page).

Jill had worked hard. As I thought back over the extensive additions she had made in four conferences, I felt a sense of accomplishment. I was surprised at her behavior when she shared her published book with the whole group. I had expected to hear the lively, squeaky voice, the expressive reader I had heard at all stages of the publishing cycle. Instead, she read softly, mumbled words, lost her place, and dropped the book on the floor. This, according to Egan, was typical of her behavior at all stages of the process earlier in the year. Now it seemed confined to the large group situation.

Exposing herself before this group was like asking, "Well, what do you think of *it*? What do you think of *me*?" Earlier in the publishing cycle, she had relied on her audience as part of the process. She enjoyed the banter and joking, the challenges and changing. She was excited, responsive, in control. Yet when she placed the book in the publishing bucket, the process seemed to end for her; she lost control. The book became final and separate. She experienced her audience on a different level: before, as challenger and prober, now, as critic and judge. Despite the positive nature of the sharing—Jill chose the people she wanted to comment on her book; everyone knew they must share what they liked about it—Jill retreated. She was flushed and embarrassed. Jill was a child of process, not product. The information she offered to the group during the sharing confirmed this

*My Bird on My Mom's and Tom's Anniversary*

Page 1) My bird is a Cockatiel.
① He chirps all day on the door. ④
2) My bird has vitamins in his water.
I think it is funny, don't you?
His food is sunflower seeds and gravel
and parrot seeds. ③
① 3) A cockateil is funny looking because
he has feathers sticking up and when he's young,
his face is gray and when he's older, his
face is yellow. ③
4) One fine night the bird flew out of the den
and the dog bit the bird and the bird didn't
die but the dog pulled out some of the bird's ③
feathers and he threw up. The dog said
"Grrrrrrrr" at the bird. ⑤
5) My sister would rather have a horse instead ①
because the bird chirps while we are watching
t.v. ②
① 6) I love my bird because he is nice to me. ③
7) My bird said to say "Goodbye". ①
8) The End. ①
9) *About the Author*
My bird is named Gus.
His name is really Augustus. ②
On my Mom's anniversary, we got a bird. ⑤

| | |
|---|---|
| ① Initial Composing. Draft I | March 7 |
| ② Conference with Debbie. Draft II Revisions. | March 11 |
| ③ Conference with Egan. Draft III Revisions. | March 11 |
| ④ Conference with Egan Draft IV Revisions. | March 13 |
| ⑤ Group Conference. Draft V Revisions. | March 21 |

perception. She made sure to tell the class she had spent the "whole morning" illustrating page one; she went to the master file for her draft copy so she could show the class *all* the changes she had made and the resulting messiness of her draft: process news.

Jill's published product entered the class library on March 25 where it joined over a hundred other published works by the child writers of Egan's second grade class. The title was entered on the Rockwell Publishing Company chart of published works, posted outside the door of the classroom. The books listed beside Jill's name now read as follows:

1) *Squeaky and Me*
2) *A Trip*
3) *Stitches*
4) *Earrings*
5) *My Puppy*
6) *My Bird on My Mom's and Tom's Anniversary*

As I looked again at Jill's published book, I was not overly impressed. The book was interesting but ordinary. It was certainly not the best published piece Jill had done that year. She had written it at a time when she was stuck for topics and just coming out of her slump. The book was a book; the child, a child. No miracles. No child prodigy. The product told little. The extraordinary thing was the process, a process that gave Jill room to pull herself out of a rut; a process that helped her develop an inadequate beginning into a competent end; a process that allowed her to emerge from the completion of one publishing cycle, recharged for the next.

Egan's classroom environment allowed Jill to experience her own writing process and develop as a writer. Jill remained in control because Egan allowed her to do so. Jill chose her writing materials, her paper and pencil, her topic for writing. Jill determined the time spent composing, the number of interruptions she would allow or encourage. Guided through an extensive conference process, Jill decided what changes would be made. Jill chose the book she would publish, the cover the book would be bound in; she controlled the illustration process. She worked with a teacher who put the responsibility on the child writer.

In such an environment, Jill had no illusions about the difficulty of writing. She knew it took time and hard work. She knew that everything she wrote would not be her best, that expectations of perfection during the early stages were unrealistic. She was learning to value revision. Her behavior during the publishing cycle indicated that she had come to value process over product.

On Tuesday, March 25, Jill concluded her publishing cycle. On March 26 her writing folder was empty. On March 27, she had a morning conference with Egan about poetry and wrote a poem, "Pussywillows," which was published and displayed that afternoon. The same day, she shared her *Shel Silverstein* book with the whole class and began a new book. She chose the title, *At Home is Fun*, scribbled some ideas. She was ready to write.

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# REVISION: IN THE WRITER'S WORKSHOP AND IN THE CLASSROOM

Donald H. Graves
Donald M. Murray
*University of New Hampshire*

## *INTRODUCTION*

In an attempt to explore the revision process, the *Journal of Education* invited a writer, who is also a researcher into the writing process, to keep a journal while he was revising a novel and several pieces of nonfiction. We also invited a researcher into the writing process, who is also a writer, to comment on the writer's journal and to point out the classroom implications of the writer's testimony.

The writer is Donald Murray, a Professor of English at the University of New Hampshire. During the period when he kept this journal — September 19, 1979 to December 8, 1979 — he revised a novel of more than 300 manuscript pages and revised four pieces of nonfiction. Donald Graves, the researcher, is Associate Professor of Education at the University of New Hampshire and Director of the Writing Process Laboratory. He is now working full time on an NIE-funded study of the writing processes of six-, seven-, eight-, and nine-year-old children. Through the direct observation of children with video and hand recordings, he and his two research associates, Susan Sowers and Lucy Calkins, are completing the second year of daily observation of sixteen children as they write, and collecting large group data from children in nine different classrooms in the same two year period.

***Murray***

Yesterday Aviva called and, apologetically, asked me to cut my chapter on "The Feel of Writing" from sixteen pages to twelve. She was surprised at my delight. Given no choice but to cut I become the surgeon. It would go fast, and I knew the piece would be better for the surgery.

• • •

Steph pointed out in my draft of a chapter for the Donovan-McClelland book that I incorrectly used "for" in the second paragraph. She suggested "because." My reaction was normal; I

***Graves***

Rebellion is not the exclusive property of the professional writer. I find it a healthy sign when children rebel in order to maintain control of their information or language. The child may be rejected her suggestion, as I would reject any editor's suggestion. I overreacted and rewrote the whole paragraph. When I receive criticism, I normally put the draft aside and start a new one. It is probably the way I reestablished control over my territory. Childish. But the paragraph was better. "For" became "who."

"wrong," but the greater issue in the long run will be the child's sense of control of the writing process. We are experts at stealing children's writing voices.

• • •

The principal changes in the chapter for Donovan and McClelland were inserts which developed important points toward the end of the piece or which wove concepts from the early part of the piece through the rest of it. The early pages were rewritten many, many times. The changes were reinforcements of what was discovered through the early rewriting of the beginning.

Our data show that children as young as eight years of age are capable of writing to *find out* what they mean. For such children, six to ten unassigned drafts are not unusual.

• • •

Yesterday I drafted a tentative new beginning of the novel; revising becoming rehearsing. I know what has to happen in the new beginning. In addition to all the usual things, such as introducing the story, the main characters, setting the scene, establishing the voice, I have to allow Ian to discover the murder of Lucinda's children, which he didn't know in the last draft until the middle of the novel. Sometime this summer, I realized he had to know from the beginning and that knowledge would give a necessary energy to the beginning of the novel. I recalled William Gibson's advice in *Shakespeare's Game*, "A play begins when a world in some state of equipoise, always uneasy, is broken by a happening."

Murray has a different pace than that permitted in most school situations. He waits, listens, suspends judgement. He is surprised by his characters and information. The waiting is the best aid to redrafting. "Oh, this is missing. I forgot to say why he was upset."

Papers due within the same class period, or even in the short space of a few days, do not aid listening or that important sense of ownership of the writing.

• • •

I don't think while writing; I see. I watched him find the old newspaper clippings, saw, felt his reaction to the news. I do not think what Ian should do; I watch him and record what he does. And yet the technical problem has been thought out before. Planted. Was the scene I watched what grew from that seed?

To cut sixteen pages to twelve for Aviva. I count the lines on a page — twenty-seven — estimate where editorial changes have added lines, and come up with a total: one hundred nine lines to cut.

I have observed surgeons. I cut fast, clean strokes, no hesitation, and subtract each line from the total.

Thirty minutes, and I am at the end and have cut one hundred seventeen lines, eight over. I cut eight hundred twenty-seven words and added sixty-seven. I have eight lines to use to clarify, restore, or develop if necessary. Now I go through and look at the notes in the margins of copies I have given colleagues, after I have cut on instinct.

• • •

As I walked home from school today I rehearsed yesterday's idea. I could start the novel without a new first chapter, weaving the new material through the old.

• • •

Revision of one article I am doing is not revision by my definition. There are no new visions or insights, just simple editing for clarification. It is a bad article. It needs no work, has no possibilities hidden between its words.

• • •

When I reread a draft and disgust cramps my bowels, I've learned to back off. It's taken me a long time to

Starting with first grade, children have to become proficient in the time-space dimensions of writing on paper. "This will be a two page paper; oh, I'm stuck, where will I put this long word?"

When children write regularly, they rehearse while watching TV, riding on buses, in all sorts of places. Just knowing they will write every day enables them to think about writing when they are not actually writing. Professional writers "panic" at the thought of losing one day's writing, simply because it ruins thinking in between writing sessions. Picking up the cold trail for amateur or pro is a disheartening task. Children who compose as few as two to three times a week, lose out on the important thinking that goes on between writing episodes.

realize that I can't force a solution to a writing problem. What do I do when I'm stuck? I quit.

• • •

It has taken me years to realize that quitting doesn't make you a quitter. The football coach still yells in my ear. I keep coming back to the writing desk and keep quitting — without guilt (without too much guilt).

• • •

I am surprised how calm I am at the slow start of the revision of the novel. I feel it is perking, somewhere. I have identified a technical problem in the first chapter — the dialogue on the telephone — and I have a rough sequence of action. I have to get to the typewriter and that's not easy with the teaching schedule I've established for myself. I resent this dependence on the typewriter to get this revision going. Usually I revise by pen, but this particular Olympia Electric is necessary on these pages in some way I can't understand. Perhaps I have to make the writing real by seeing it in type. That may make it an object that I can study.

• • •

Beginnings are terrifying. You have to capture the reader instantly, and there is so much exposition and description that has to be wound into the narrative, so it can rapidly uncoil in the reader's mind.

• • •

I have to make sure that the new beginning is in the voice of the novel. Each piece of work has its own voice. If that voice is strong and I can hear it then I can easily return and confidently revise after interruptions. If the

The "can I have another piece of paper" syndrome is in many classrooms, especially where there are good readers who write infrequently. Their writing tools lag well behind their ability to read. They are painfully aware of the discrepancy between their written text and what they wish they could say.

Children erase, make brushing movements as if to make the paper crisp and clean. Sometimes they need to recopy, just to see it lined up, or just to simulate what final copy might be like. Unfortunately, too many children are intolerant of cross-outs and manipulations needed to make the text "messy in order to make it clear" (Calkins, 1979).

Six-year-olds are not terrified in the least. But with each passing year, as a sense of options, fear or failure, or growing sense of audience appears, the terror of the blank page becomes more real. This fear occurs with the best of teaching. Imagine the terror of the blank page when the teacher is punitive.

voice isn't clear, then I don't have a piece of writing, and there's no point in revising.

* * *

I rarely refer to the notes I make about a work in process during the writing.

* * *

I have been working on the novel in my head, but I am being drawn into the drafting by a force like gravity.

* * *

Chapter one just took off, and I'm running after it as fast as I can.

* * *

I was outside the novel and then, by writing, I was inside it. I have no longer any conscious consideration of technical matters. The novel has begun to tell me what to do.

* * *

I waited patiently, and now the story is working. I have three pages of draft without consciously selecting from the dozens of strategic choices in my journal and in my head.

* * *

Three pages in thirty-five minutes. I'm itching to start the next novel. The better one piece of writing is going, the more insistently the other pieces demand writing. There is an explosion of possibility. I want to do poems, stories, articles, plays — to prune, to paint.

* * *

When children receive more time for writing, and on a regular basis, they learn to wait more effectively. When children wait, they may confer with the teacher, or with other children, or just sit and read what they have already written. This gives distance to the text and greatly aids the act of revision.

And waiting is the prelude to the creative burst. It is rare, whether the writer be child or professional, that the *high quality burst* is not preceded by effective listening and waiting. Such activity has great carry-over to other curricular areas, simply because the child is in touch with himself or herself as a learner. Listening does that. As educators, I think we have to ask ourselves if we provide such high quality listening time for children with our over-inflated curricula and time slots that must be filled.

Regular writing helps children to put the spelling and mechanical aspects of writing behind them. Only then can children give greater attention to the information. Regular daily writing, with effective challenge and response to the writing, aids the writer in reflecting on the craft itself.

I am aware, when I am writing as fast as I was this morning, that I am weaving threads, but I am not conscious of picking up the threads and using them any more than an experienced weaver is conscious of the learned act of weaving. I simply sense the need for action, referring back to a previous action, for setting up the beginning of a new pattern, of drawing together, knotting, loosening up, busy, busy, busy, at my clattering loom, but not thinking. Doing. That's the best thing about craft — you can get beyond thinking.

• • •

Is it the vocation of the artist to celebrate life by showing the moments of order within disorder? The greater the art, the more temporary these orders? Or the more the artist makes us aware of the forces threatening the temporary order, the more moving the work?

• • •

It is one of those rare mornings when the desk is clear, my tools are at hand, Mozart is on the radio, and the autumn sun pours through the yellow, baring trees. I feel happy and I have a slight headache, a bit of cramp in the bowels, fear that the work will not go — or go well. But the timer is on. I must type up what is written to get to the point where I can weld the new beginning to the previous draft.

• • •

The draft is rolling. It is developing, increasing, growing full with additional information, revelations, connections. I follow it as it speaks, and then when it is really going well, I am compelled to step back, to go to the john, heat another cup of coffee, put a record on the phonograph, stand back, get distance, see if it is really going as well as I thought.

• • •

I am happiest when making imaginary worlds; I am still the only child whose playmates live in the walls.

• • •

This writing must be like skiing Tuckerman, hurtling down, almost out of control, the skis not quite touching the snow, faster, faster.

• • •

If I typed my own draft a hundred times, I would write a hundred different novels, for this imagined world is so real and has so many dimensions it can be seen a hundred different ways.

• • •

Fitting, joining, cutting, shaping, smoothing — the busy cabinetmaker in his shop.

• • •

Is there enough? Too much? Again and again, line by line, paragraph by paragraph, page by page, I must ask these same questions. And answering them by writing, ask them again of the new lines.

• • •

Murray mentions that he is *compelled* to step back from his writing. During the high point of an episode, I have seen children get up to sharpen pencils, wander around the room (where permitted) or talk to another child. This is particularly true if the child is trying something new, a logical transition not tried before, or a new description. The intensity of engagement actually demands disengagement.

"How long should it be? Are there enough pages?" The concept "it is good if it is long" begins at age six and continues on through advanced doctoral degrees. Small wonder that the idea of cutting rarely enters into the teaching of writing. Through effective questions, teachers can elicit information needed to heighten one section and thereby make other sections seem unnecessary. Such questions as "Tell me in one sentence what this is about." can be a help with cutting.

It is easy to move chunks of writing around, or to fit new chunks in. There is never one way, but many ways.

The use of carets, wide margins, scissors and paste for reorganizing an early draft is useful for young writers. With daily writing and good teacher conferences, there is a cluster of eight-year-olds who are ready for this kind of activity. Too many children see writing, particularly their own, as fixed, immovable. They need to see how it can be moved around, and with profit. If teachers model these tools of reorganization with their own writing, children can see how the space-time issues of writing are solved in revision. We can live a lifetime and never see craftpersons revising their work.

• • •

Reading your own prose is an act of faith. It takes courage to leave in, not to cut, not to change.

• • •

I am suspicious when it works the way I want it to work.

• • •

Writing without thought. Just writing. No thinking about writing and then writing, but writing/thinking, writing that is thought.

• • •

There comes a time when you have to admit that the work can't be perfect. It will never match the vision.

Teachers who sense that an impossible road of perfection is defeating a writer need to help the writer to end the selection. They can even model an ending to their own writing. "It isn't perfect. I *feel* it isn't where I want it to be, but I am going to end the piece just the same." Children *need to see their teachers write*, not to copy but to sense their involvement in the task of writing.

• • •

Put something in on one side of the draft and something pops out on the other.

• • •

(From a letter I wrote to another writer) — "I've gotten the first draft of the first chapter of the novel revised and typed and moved ahead to those dreadful, awful, terrible chapters immediately after the first chapter (the first third of the novel). I knew that they would read like shit, but I knew that if I could grit my teeth I could face them and fight my way through. I sailed through them in a matter of hours, and I saw that the piece of writing had demanded the new beginning I thought so radical. To put it differently, I thought I would have to make a lot of changes to justify the new beginning. In fact, the 'changes' were made before the new beginning."

• • •

It took me from spring to autumn to create the new beginning of the novel. To put it differently, it took me months to hear what the novel had to tell me about its story. If I had listened to the draft it would have told me how to begin the novel. It did tell me. When I found the right beginning there were no major changes to be made in the text. The novel was waiting to be begun that way.

• • •

I am completely within the text. I start to add a sentence, and it is already there, written last January, just the way I would write it now. It must be the right sentence.

• • •

I wonder if extensive rewriting is not mostly a failure of prewriting, or allowing adequate time for rehearsal, a matter of plucking the fruit before it is ripe.

• • •

When the beginning is right the rest follows, and more quickly. As young writers develop, they learn to make decisions about the content of their writing at an earlier time. For example, some children do effective decision making at the point of topic choice. One topic is chosen, two excluded. Indeed, this can be an effective moment of revision. Then there are those who will try three to five leads. The more advanced the writer, the more they realize the importance of early decisions.

But you have to bite the fruit to know it is really ripe.

• • •

Much of the reordering in the text is making sure that the most important material is at the point of emphasis in the paragraph, in the sentence, in the scene. Where are the points of emphasis? At the end and at the beginning. The important information must be those points.

• • •

It's so hard to go back and face your copy. It is a mirror. It does not show the person you hoped to be but the person you are.

• • •

This page explodes with possibility. I must control it. I see a thousand stories at once, each superimposed on the other.

• • •

I hear myself say in my head what I read on the page seconds later.

• • •

The biggest problem in revising this morning is my itchy nose. I must be allergic to my own prose.

• • •

I have to keep stepping back, read a few pages of something else, keep my distance, or I'll be drawn into the story.

• • •

Sometimes I am drawn into my story. This is the reality, and I look back at the writer, at the desk, won-

This is the same location of attention with the young writer — beginnings and endings. For the young writer this is the easiest location to help them with revision

Children who find that their selection is about two or three subjects, not one, should not be dismayed. When they keep a list of future topics, or collections of discarded material cut out of other drafts, they already have a start on another selection. No extra writing is ever wasted. They are merely shards of rehearsal for another selection

Students need help with the process of gaining distance. Teachers help through the writing conference "What did you have in mind here? Underline the one line that says more than any other what this selection is about."

Stand back and watch an entire group of children in the process of writing Some compose with their noses on the dering who he is, why is he bent over, his nose almost touching his knuckles, making marks on paper, muttering to himself.

• • •

The story makes jagged unexpected moves. I laugh in surprise and chase after it.

• • •

After revising, I am much more observant when I walk to school, noticing the way women stalk in boots, how the three North African students gesture to each other. I see a man turn from a woman and make up reasons, whole movies in my mind.

• • •

In revision, we are constantly adjusting distance, the distance between writer and experience, writer and meaning, writer and the writing, writer and reader, language and subject, text and reader.

• • •

I have only one reader while I am revising — myself. I am trying to make this page come clear. That's all.

• • •

The writer has a split brain — creator and critic — or competing forces — freedom and discipline.

paper; others put their cheeks on the paper and look across at their pens writing; others squirm and jump in their chairs, place knees on the desk, whereas others lean far back, almost to the point of retreat.

Children do extensive reading when they reread and revise their own texts. Just how much reading is involved in the writing process is just beginning to dawn on our research team. Large amounts of time have been taken from formal reading instruction and given over to time for writing in rooms where the study is being conducted. Surprisingly, reading scores did not go down; they went up, and significantly. Since writing is the *making of reading*, children may decode for ideas differently than if they had never written at all.

There is no right or wrong, just what works within this situation.

Or, as one teacher in Scotland told me, "I don't speak of the paper as right or wrong. It is only finished or unfinished. That's the way it is with art."

• • •

Every change in the text affects the text fore and aft, sets off a chain reaction of new meanings.

At about the age of eight, with effective conferences, there is a growing group of advanced writers who recognize the effect that one change can have on an entire selection. Recognizing the relationship of parts and wholes is an important developmental phenomenon.

• • •

The mad weaver keeps dozens of threads in his mind, weaving so hard he is only rarely aware of the weaving, and worried when he becomes aware of it. His weaving should appear natural, not contrived. He contrives to be natural.

• • •

How do you know what works? By the satisfying sound it makes when it clicks into place.

• • •

Why is it so hard to get working when it is so good to be lost within the experience, to lose all sense of time until there is a sudden coming to, and I stretch. My legs, arms, back are stiff, as if I had been asleep or in a trance.

• • •

I think I have made no changes within a page, but I count two hundred thirteen words put in and taken out.

• • •

What do I do when I revise? I read to add what is needed to be there, cut what isn't needed, reorder what must be moved.

Without knowing it, Murray has just listed the developmental order in which children learn to revise: 1) add material, 2) cut, 3) reorder

I hear my writing as loud as if I speak it. Sometimes I do speak it. The final test is always, "How does it sound?"

• • •

Yesterday I read some of the novel in Becky's class. It is helpful to read before an audience. I heard Frank's voice in my voice, clearer than I had ever heard it when I wrote it.

• • •

Each day I learn to write. No, each day I learn to see. If I can see clearly the writing will be easy.

• • •

Revision, or perhaps rehearsal for revision, goes on all the time, while I am in the car, walking to class, waiting for a meeting to start, eating, going to sleep, watching television. I constantly revise in my head, fitting things together to see if they work. I am convinced that what I know of this activity is only a small proportion of what goes on while I am awake and while I am asleep. My head is constantly writing.

• • •

The satisfaction of rearranging words is a physical satisfaction. Once you have the order right, you can thump a sentence the way a trucker thumps tires. The sentence will give off a satisfying sound.

How does it sound? Does it sound exciting, beautiful, funny? Children strive to put the sounds of speech back into their writing through prosodic markers (darkened letters, capitals for points of emphasis), the use of exclamation points, over-use of interjections, or conversation. Children are bothered by the silence of their words on the page. They like "noisy" pages.

Rehearsal is an important act for all writers. Children are no exception. Rehearsal begins with drawing (when children need to see what they mean) just prior to the act of writing.

Gradually, children rehearse farther from the actual act of writing. Or, the first draft becomes a rehearsal for the second. Rehearsals become more frequent and tentative. Daily writing leads to an increase in effective rehearsal. The most difficult writing of all is that writing where rehearsal begins simultaneously with the assignment. When children write infrequently, this is precisely what happens, and is one of the major reasons why writing is the hated act. Indeed, unfamiliarity breeds contempt.

The quality of the writing often comes from detail.

• • •

The piece of writing detaches itself from the writer. The writer can look at it as if it were a stranger — the daughter who comes to visit with a new husband. She — and the draft — is familiar and strange at the same time.

• • •

I like to revise by hand so that I can enter into the text the way a surgeon plunges his hands down into a body and messes around.

• • •

I hear the words as I use them. Revising is an act of talking to myself. I sound out the words, testing them by my ear, listening to how they sound in relation to each other.

• • •

Revision requires a special kind of reading. The reader/writer must keep all the strands of the past writing in mind, and yet maintain a vision of what *may* come, of what is coming clear through the writing.

• • •

Writing is a puzzle with no one solution. There are always many right solutions. Any one you choose sets up new puzzles.

This is the same person who changes one sentence, yet sees the effect on the whole. But this person has a different pace, is a student of listening to the text. The teacher provides for this stance with a much slower pace for written selections as well as by asking listening-type questions in the writing conference. Teachers who provide a slower pace do not lower demands or expectations. Actually, it is a much higher level of demand because the student must learn to listen to his/her voice rather than that of the teacher.

There is no such thing as free writing. The work takes over and establishes its own discipline. The piece of writing has momentum, energy — a river in flood. Learning to be a writer is learning to go with the flood.

• • •

I knead language, pound it, stretch it, shape it, work it; I am up to my elbows in language.

• • •

Reading what isn't — yet — on the page is a special skill only distantly related to reading what is printed on the page.

• • •

Revising is, in part, a matter of making up reasons for what worked by accident, or at least what wasn't made consciously. It is the rational end of an irrational process. The intent often comes after the act.

• • •

The surprise during writing of reading what you have written. You thought you knew what you were going to write, you thought you knew what you were writing, now you find out what you have written.

• • •

Through revising, you let the meaning in the writing escape.

• • •

What usually appears most spontaneous, most natural, most casual in a writer's style comes in the final editing.

• • •

The experience of writing is so intense that this is a real question to me if a person imagines he is insane.

The work can take over when the teacher consciously works for students to find their own voices and to be responsive to the effect of voice on information. Students must teach teachers about their subjects, whether it be grade one or a dissertation.

The intent can come later if the audience is not introduced too soon into the writing process. Too much store is put in knowing an audience before the writer begins. It may be that intent and audience are both discovered in the later stages of revision. To be responsive to oneself, my own voice, the information before me, demands the suspension of both intent and audience.

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to write about an insane person, does he actually become insane? (If a writer is insane and writes about a sane person, does he become sane?)

• • •

My dreams and my fantasies, the stories I have written in my head, are my reality. What I write, I have lived, and I no longer know for sure what is dreamt, fantasized, written, or lived.

• • •

It is simple to revise: just add, cut, and rearrange simultaneously.

• • •

The goal of revision is clarity, which does not mean simplicity, which would not allow complexity to be made clear.

• • •

There is the voice of the writer, the voices of the characters, and the voice of the piece of writing itself.

• • •

As I revise the novel, I am again within the story, within the lives of the characters. I can't remember how this scene works out. I am worried about them and surprised when I come to the solution on my page which I do not remember making up. I didn't make it up. I experienced it and wrote down what I saw and felt.

Too much store has been placed in "mature" syntax, increased subordinations, and large vocabularies with too little focus on choice and revision. The "t" unit has tended to dominate as an exercise of "good" writing. The jump from "mature" to "good" was inevitable and too easily made. The act of simple choice is a highly complex act. Yesterday one nine-year-old child said to another, "Your fingers are slipping from the branch and you are looking for a place to put your feet." This came as a summary of her companion's attempt to end her draft. Among hundreds of options, the economy of her language is impressive.

Revision has less to do with language than we think To find the right language we do not look at the language, but through the language to the situation.

• • •

I do not feel differently revising fiction and nonfiction. I feel no difference in the process, and I can move from one to the other in the same morning without any conscious adjustments.

• • •

Is the work all written within the brain or within the paper and it merely has to be found, not made?

• • •

The work itself takes control of the writer. He is never in control of a successful piece of work; the work is in control of him

• • •

Reading these entries over, I feel they are islands which are the peaks of an underwater mountain range. Most of what happened during these months of revision remains unseen and unexplored.

The entries, however, reveal an attitude toward work which is typical for many writers and alien to many classrooms. Writers respect evolving writing and look in to the draft, not out from the draft, to rulebook, published model of editor/teacher to see how the draft will solve its own problems with the assistance of the listening, watching, waiting writer

I hope, reading this over, that my joy at being within the work is apparent It was a good time, a productive period of work, and I am grateful to the drafts that produced interesting problems I learned a great deal about writing and about the subject of the writ-

Murray shows so clearly that there is no difference between "creative writing" and other writing. All writing is an act of creation. Work in one genre aids other genres. The implications for writing across the curriculum, treating all writing as process and creation, are important.

Although our NIE study is a study of young writers and how they develop, the day-by-day monitoring of their problem solving provides us with an excellent opportunity to view the effects of teaching practice. We are fortunate to be gathering data where teachers have provided an entirely different place and pace for writing in the curriculum.

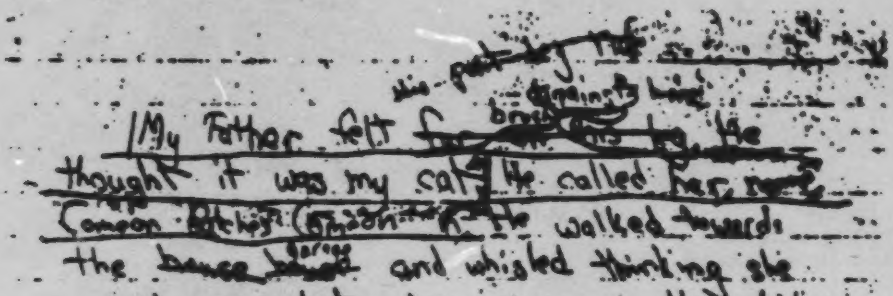
When teachers understand the writing process, practice it themselves, and respond intelligently to what children know, children write and write well. They revise as an internal dictate, not because the teacher has assigned it. They revise because they see their work as unfinished, not because they are in error.

This careful monitoring of children's writing has shown us that they must ing in observing how those problems resolved themselves under my pen.

* * *

deal with many of the same problems as Murray and other professional writers. Indeed, the intensive monitoring and study of writers, amateur or professional, can be of benefit to both. We are just beginning to understand *what* is involved in the writing process and the potential of the children in our classrooms.

***Below are two examples of revision in process:***

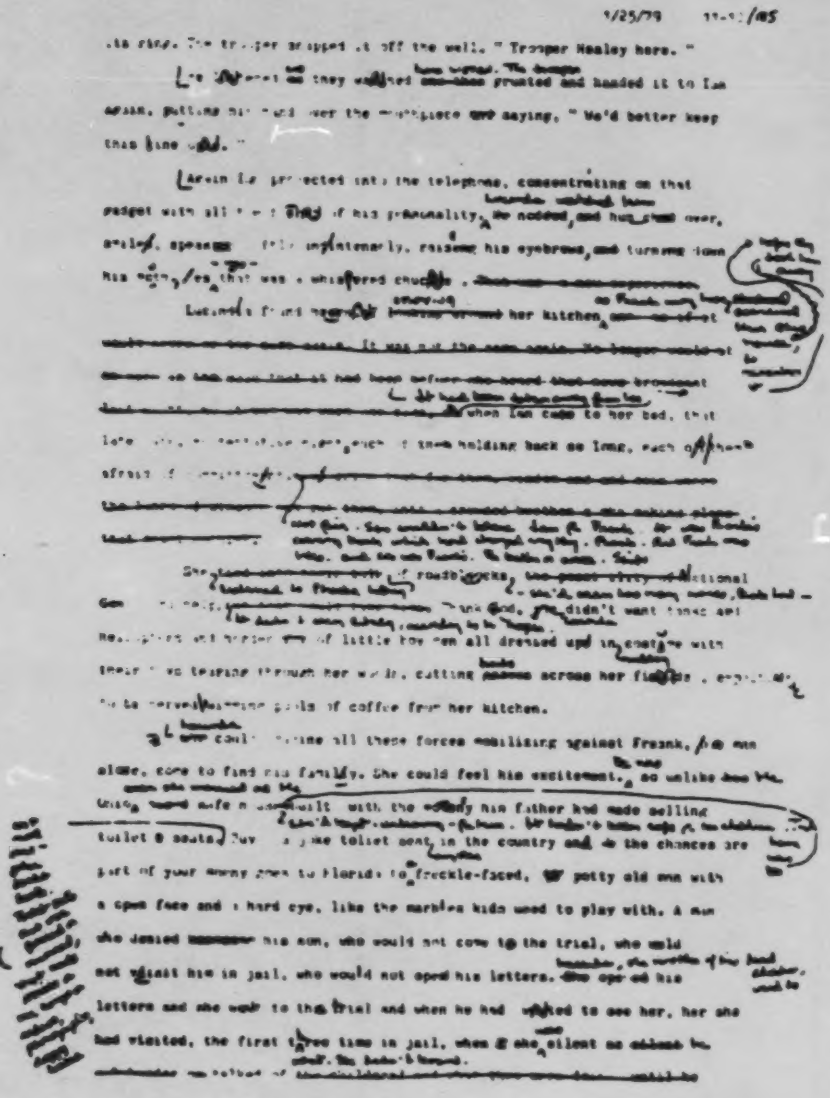


My Father felt ~~f~~ [illegible] He thought it was my cat. He called her name ~~Gameon~~ [illegible] He walked ~~towards~~ the ~~house~~ garage and whisled ~~thinking she~~ would come, but when he saw the white stripe I heard the garage door go down fast and ~~my~~ Bfather ran ~~up~~ upstairs quickly. I was ~~surprised~~ amazed when he told me ~~what happened~~.

~~He got so sick and~~ told ME ~~what happened~~

~~got rubbing him.~~

walking beside him.



1/25/79 [illegible] /85

[illegible] ring. The trooper snapped it off the wall. " Trooper Healey here. "

[illegible] they [illegible] grunted and handed it to Ian again, putting his hand over the mouthpiece [illegible] saying, " We'd better keep this line [illegible]. "

Again [illegible] into the telephone, concentrating on that gadget with all [illegible] of his personality. He nodded, and hung [illegible] over, [illegible] his eyebrows, and turning [illegible] his [illegible] that was a whispered chuckle.

[illegible] her kitchen, [illegible]

[illegible] when Ian came to her bed, [illegible] holding back so long, each of [illegible]

She [illegible] of roadblocks, [illegible] Thank God, [illegible] didn't want [illegible] of little boy men all dressed up in [illegible] with their [illegible] tearing through her [illegible], cutting [illegible] across her fields, [illegible] to be served [illegible] pails of coffee from her kitchen.

[illegible] all these forces mobilizing against Frank, [illegible] alone, come to find his family. She could feel his excitement, so unlike [illegible] with the money his father had made selling toilet seats. [illegible] toilet seat in the country and the chances are part of your money goes to Florida to a freckle-faced, [illegible] potty old man with a open face and a hard eye, like the marbles kids used to play with. A man who denied his son, who would not come to the trial, who would not visit him in jail, who would not open his letters. [illegible] his letters and she went to the trial and when he had [illegible] to see her, her she had visited, the first three time in jail, when [illegible] silent [illegible]

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# RESEARCH UPDATE

## A New Look at Writing Research

Donald H. Graves

*for the Committee on Research, National Council of Teachers of English*

*"A New Look at Writing Research" is the first in a series of three Research Update columns surveying writing research, research needed for the 1980s, and how research will have influence in the 80s. The three articles are from a chapter in a forthcoming book about writing in grades K-8 edited by Shirley Haley-James, to be published by NCTE in the spring of 1981.*

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First, the bad news. Only 156 studies on writing in the elementary grades, or an average of six annually, have been done in the United States in the last twenty-five years.[1] Writing research was in such low esteem from 1955-1972 that eighty-four percent of all studies were done by dissertation alone. It wasn't important enough for most doctoral advisors to consider writing research for themselves. Rather, it was an exercise for students to apply courses in statistics to their dissertations. Eighty-one percent of all dissertation research in this period involved experimental designs seeking to find "good methods" in the teaching of writing.

These sad figures came at a time in American education when most school money was spent on developing children's reading skills. For every $3000 spent on children's ability to receive information $1.00 was spent on their power to send it in writing.[2] The funds for writing research came to less than one-tenth of one percent of all research funds for education.

From 1955-1972, sixty-eight percent of all research was concerned with what the teacher was doing in the classroom. We were so preoccupied with ourselves as teachers that only twelve percent of the studies were concerned with a look at what children did when they wrote.

The research conducted on best methods for teachers was of the worst type. We took the science model of research and attempted to remove certain variables from their context to explain two crafts, teaching and writing, by dismissing environments through statistical means. We tried to explain complex wholes and processes through "hard data" about insignificant variables removed from context.

We complained that teachers would not pay attention to research. But so far the teachers have been right—most of the research wasn't readable and was of limited value. It couldn't help them in the classroom. They could not see their schools, classrooms, or children in the data. *Context* had been ignored.

Context needs to be explained. When six-year-old Janet writes "reindrer" in the midst of the sentence, "All of the *reindrer* lovd him," the word falls in more than the context of a written syntactic unit. Janet sings, speaks, rereads, listens to her text as she composes this selection for the Christmas holidays. She draws after she writes, chats with other children about expectations of Christmas gifts, and interviews with the teacher. She writes in a room that encourages child publication, mutual child help, and the importance of personal voice and information. Within the context of Janet's own development, she has gone through three stages of invented spelling: first sounding letters, then writing consonants in initial and final positions, and now borrowing from the visual memory systems contributed by reading.

In the broader ethnographic context, Janet's mother writes letters, is college educated and interested in her child's progress, and lives in a suburban-rural town of 8500 in New England. Janet's teacher writes for publication. In Janet's school, the principal speaks, writes, and listens to teachers. In turn, teachers know their ideas will be heard. Such contexts have been ignored in much of the past research related to writing.

Now for some good news. More than half of all research on children's writing in the last twenty-five years was done in the last seven, and only forty-two percent of it by dissertation. Research has broadened to include advisors of research and other professionals. Interest in descriptive studies of children's activity rose from twelve to forty-eight percent of all studies. The context of writing is beginning to be described, though very crudely. Experimental design studies of what teachers do have dropped to forty percent of the total.

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[1] Studies were reviewed through ERIC, *Research in the Teaching of English*, *Elementary English*, *Language Arts*, *Dissertation Abstracts*.

[2] These data were taken from the Ford study, *Balance the Basics: Let Them Write*, by Donald H. Graves, and from surveys of public school spending on textbooks, personnel, and materials related to reading and writing.

A new kind of research, stimulated by Janet Emig's case study of the "Composing Processes of Twelfth Grade Students" (1969), has broadened the content of investigation. Her research and the research of Graves (1975), and Graves, Calkins, Sowers (1978-80), focused on what writers did *during* the composing process. Descriptions were also given of the contexts in which the data were gathered. Although this is a new research area in terms of a history of writing research, there is growing interest by both researchers and teachers in the data coming from the studies. Most case study research is still being done with older students, notably the work of Hayes-Flower (1979-80), Sommer (1980), and Perl (1979). Far more needs to be done with younger children. We need more information on child behaviors and decisions *during* the process, rather than through speculation on child activity during writing from written products alone.

Time, money and personnel investments in writing have changed within the last three years. Great imbalances in attending to communication skills still exist, but there is more interest in the teaching of writing. Some of this has come through response to state-mandated testing which has been invoked or is on the drawing boards in almost all of the fifty states.

There is also more interest in writing because teachers are beginning to get more help with their own writing process. It is less common now for teachers to be lectured about the writing process, discussing the skill out of context, unallied with an involvement with writing itself. Such programs as the Bay Area Writing Project and the Vermont Writing Program have had national effects through attention to the teacher's own writing. Teachers have begun to understand the nature and context of the writing process through their own writing. They now can view what children do within the framework of practicing the craft themselves.

These efforts have also spurred greater interest in research, but research that relates to teachers' new understandings of the context of the writing process. That is, they now know the meaning of rehearsal (prewriting), redrafting, the development of skills for publication. They want to know more about research that provides information in which they can "see" the students and classrooms in which they teach.

Teachers want to become involved in research themselves. Those who write themselves, who have become interested in what children do when they write, want to know how they can participate in gathering their own information on children's writing.

Financial commitments to the improvement of writing are still woefully low. The National Institute of Education allocated funds for research in writing for the first time in 1977. Requests for proposals for research in writing were also instituted two years later. We have gone from nothing to barely something in the provision of research funds. Far more funds have been expended on the assessment of writing achievement. Educational Testing Service, the National Commission on Education in the States, and most State Departments have allocated funds to find out how students are achieving in writing.

This is a time of hope and optimism for the 80s. Research in writing has such a short history that it is not yet weighed lown by many of the traditions that plague nost research in education. Research in ducation has attempted to make a science of predicting human behavior from ne setting to another through statistically ontrolled experiments. From the outset, esearch in writing reflected the experinental approach, and only recently has egun to break away through processbservational studies and a broadened ontext to include the study of child growth. It is just beginning to provide information that teachers in the classroom can use.

## A Necessary Pattern of Development

We may lament that time has been wasted on experimental designs and a preoccupation with self (what teachers ought to do), but I believe this pattern of development was necessary, important, and unavoidable. Children, teachers, and researchers develop in similar patterns. I went through the same process in learning to teach.

The first day I ever taught I could only hear the sound of my own voice. I stood back and listened with terror as I searched for the right words. My seventh grade class was an audience that barely existed. My chief questions at that point were "What do I say? What do I do?" I could scarcely hear children's responses to my questions. Plans written days before determined my actions, regardless of children's responses. Answers fit my questions on a 1-1 basis, or they were not worthwhile. I hardly knew what was coming from the blur of faces in front of me.

In time the faces became more distinctive. I even began to notice what children did after I asked questions, or directed them to an activity. But my main concern was to crank up the machinery of learning, set the children on a course, and hope they would reach some worthwhile port of acquiring knowledge. Like the young learners in my room, I was only concerned with the beginning and end of learning. Not much existed in between. "How do I get started? What do I do when the papers are completed?"

Children develop along similar lines: they hear and write the initial consonants of words, then final consonants. The interior portions of words hardly exist. In reading, information at the end and beginning of selections is the most easily recalled. In Piaget's simple directive to children to draw all the steps showing a pencil falling from a vertical to horizontal position, the children can only draw the initial (vertical) and final (horizontal) positions, with none of the intermediate stages sketched in. When children, adults, researchers, first initiate activity, there are no middles, only beginnings and endings. In short, they have a very limited space-time understanding of the universe, not unlike my first days of teaching. Furthermore, they are so absorbed in the rightness of their own acts, they find it difficult to empathize with the points of others.

It wasn't until much later in my teaching career that I was able to focus on what children were doing, in order to adjust my own teaching style. I found that I could not afford to be without the information that told me where they were. As a result, I began to participate in the "middle" of the process of their learning. For example, I asked questions while they were in the middle of observing the travel patterns of turtles. I responded to their initial observation notes, asking more questions. And back they went to add, delete, revise their earlier observations.

It is encouraging to note similar development in research patterns over the past twenty-five years. We have moved from a preoccupation with self in teaching to more studies of children, and now the middle ground, the process of writing itself. The space-time factors of research have been expanded. Such trends must continue for the 80s. But we must continue to be wary of studies that reduce the context of investigation.

### Further Research Backgrounds

We look at recent history of research in writing that we might not repeat past mistakes. We review this history to take stock, learn, and forge on. We have been slow to take heed of the warnings of significant researchers. Since the early twenties, one researcher after another has warned of the danger of fragmentary approaches to research in children's writing. Braddock (1963) observes that writing is an organic process that defies segmentation:

> Anyone who has read a considerable portion of the research in the teaching and learning of English composition knows how much it leaves to be desired. In the first major summary and critical analysis of the research, Lyman (1929) wrote that "a complex phenomenon such as composition quality seems to defy careful analysis into constituent parts," and noted that the pioneer studies he reviewed "measure pupil products and assume that by so doing they are evaluating the manifold intangible processes of the mind by which those products were attained.

Meckel (1963), Park (1960) and Braddock (1963) called for research that focused more on learners than teachers. They called for studies on the writing process that involved longitudinal research. Such research was difficult, too time consuming for doctoral students, and certainly defiant of conventional statistical interventions.

### Problems with Experimental Design

Though they purport to give direct help, persons using experimental designs to conduct writing research have contributed least to the classroom teacher. They respond to questions teachers ask most. "How do I get the students to write? What will stimulate, motivate them into writing action? What is the best way to correct papers?" Typically, the research model will try three different stimuli to "activate" students into better writing. One group will receive "no treatment." If one method, usually the favorite method of the researcher, should receive better marks, that is, show with 95-1 odds or better that the good results in student writing from the chosen method were not due to chance, then the approach is purported to be valid for other children and teachers. This is an attempt to show via scientific means that an exportable method for teaching children to write has been found. Independent of the philosophical issues involved with this approach to teaching writing, the basic issue of context remains.

We have tried to borrow science in order to apply it to the study of human behavior. In the fields of agriculture, chemistry, medicine, practitioners cannot afford to be without the latest findings. Better strains of hybrid corn increase food production for millions, miracle drugs are synthesized and save lives. New processes for using chemicals are developed, saving millions of dollars for industry. Research in science delivers.

Research in education is not a science. We cannot transfer science procedures to social events and processes. We are not speaking of corn, pills, or chemicals when we speak of what people do when they write. Elliott Mishler, in one of the most telling articles written on research in context, observes the domination of research by experimentation in the social sciences:

> Despite the philosophical critique of this traditional model of science, its application to human affairs has remained triumphant. Researcher methods based on this model which can be referred to collectively as context-stripping procedures, are taught to us in our graduate schools and we become properly certified as educational researchers, psychologists, or sociologists when we can demonstrate our competent use of them in our dissertations

Research about writing must be suspect when it ignores context or process. Unless researchers describe in detail the full context of data gathering and the processes of learning and teaching, the data cannot be exported from room to room.

Devoid of context, the data become sterile. One of the reasons teachers have rejected research information for so long is that they have been unable to transfer faceless data to the alive, inquiring faces of the children they teach the next morning. Furthermore, the language used to convey these data has the same voiceless tone that goes with the projection of faceless information. Donald Murray complains, "The research is not written to be read." It is written for other researchers, promotions, or dusty archives in a language guaranteed for self-extinction.

Writing process research can help the classroom teacher with writing. It's just that this research cannot pretend to be science. This does not mean that research procedures cease to be rigorous when describing the full context of human behavior and environment. The human faces do not take away objectivity when the data are reported. The face emerges from enormous amounts of time spent in observing, recording, and analyzing the data. When the face emerges in the reporting, it comes from tough selection of the incident that represents a host of incidents in context.

Studies that expand the context of writing are expensive. Thousands of hours are required to gather the full data. Personnel costs are high. For this reason, better procedures need to be developed.

We can never forget that if information from one study is to be used at another teaching site, with other children, the most thorough description of contextual factors must be given. When the process and context are described in simple, straightforward language, teachers will be ready consumers of the information.

Teachers who read such information often want to try informal research projects of their own. Since the procedures were conducted in classrooms, teachers see themselves in the midst of the data along with the children. They begin to keep daily records of skills advancement along with collected writing of the children. Charts of daily child conferences, reading and writing growth patterns are observed and recorded. Much of these data are one step away from formal research studies.

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## LITERATURE AWARDS

The California Young Reader Medal Committee recently announced the winners of the California Young Reader Medal Award for 1980. As a result of the balloting of some 64,000 California school children who voted for their favorite primary and junior high book in the 1979-80 competition, the winners are *Big Bad Bruce* by Bill Peet (Houghton Mifflin, 1977) and *The Pinballs* by Betsy Byars (Harper, 1977).

The Young Reader Medal program, begun in 1974, is sponsored through the joint efforts of the California Reading Association, the California Library Association, the California Media and Library Educators Association, and the California Association of Teachers of English. It is truly a children's book award in that children are given the opportunity to nominate books of their choice and then to vote for their favorite book among those nominated. In this way school-age children of California become better acquainted with good literature, and at the same time their favorite books and authors are recognized.

# Research Update

# Writing Research for the Eighties: What Is Needed

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for the Committee on Research
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Writing research must involve the fullest possible contexts in the eighties. We can no longer have experimental or retrospective studies that move in with treatments of short duration, or that speculate on child growth and behaviors through a mere examination of written products alone. Contexts must be broadened to include closer and longer looks at children while they are writing. These contexts must be described in greater detail.

In the first article in this series (*Language Arts*, November/December 1980), trends in writing research were presented for the last twenty-five years. The weakness of experimental designs was portrayed as first used, and as the near exclusive approach to research in writing. But new trends show that experimental, descriptive and process studies are already beginning to supply more context. Such trends must be continued for the sake of quality research and usefulness for the classroom teacher.

In this column on research needed for the eighties, a more detailed description of context will be given, then a listing of research questions about children, teachers, and writing environments, followed by a discussion of new research designs and procedures.

A researcher's description of context is given within the confines of print, which is linear and segmented, word following word. Even a careful description of context through words has its limitations, since words cannot portray the many systems and variables that op-

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"Writing Research for the Eighties" is the second in a series of three articles surveying writing research. research needed for the eighties. and how research will have influence in the eighties The three articles are from a chapter in *Perspectives in Writing, K-8* edited by Shirley Haley-James to be published next month by NCTE.

erate *simultaneously* as children write. For example, as Chad writes we observe and infer the following simultaneous actions in a four second interval.

Voices "shhh - t - n" (*shooting*).

Hears own voice.

Leans toward page.

Grips pencil between thumb and forefinger.

Glances at drawing at top of paper and observes pencil operate between lines.

Feels friction of pencil on paper surface.

Holds paper with left hand with paper slightly turned to the right of midline.

Tips shoulder as if to feel action of gun (inferred).

May hear voice over intercom asking teacher a question.

Produces mental imagery of man shooting (inferred).

Produces mental imagery of word, *shooting* (inferred).

Sits on edge of chair.

Scowls at page.

To describe these events in narrative form, even with great care, still distorts the time-space dimensions of the simultaneity of events, thus the full reality of events.

### Another Look at Context

The meaning of any situation is contained in the context of the act. A fourteen-month-old child reaches several times for a ball beyond his grasp. In frustration he utters, "Ba." The mother turns, notices his outstretched hand and shouts to her husband, "John, Andy just said, 'Ball,' isn't it wonderful!" If the parent had heard the utterance without observing the context, she would probably have had a different interpretation of the sounds. The full understanding of Andy's act is contained in expanding the time and space frame of investigation to reviewing the child's previous utterances, uses of language with his parents, parent responses, the child's use of symbols, activities in shops, at grandparents', in clinics, or the broader communities in which such utterances develop. Even this brief expansion of contextual understanding is a simplification of many more complex ways of observing single acts. Studies of the growth and development of preschool children's oral language have paid far more attention to contexts than studies of children's growth in writing.

The understanding of any single written word demands similar expansion of the time-space frame of investigation. It is this time-space expansion that helps us understand the act of writing, as well as the designs and procedures needed to understand written acts.

A simplified description of what is meant by "context" of writing is given in three different contextual categories: 1) The Writing Episode, 2) The Life of the Child Who Writes, and 3) The Social-Ethnographic Context of the Episode. Each of these sections will be discussed through the life of one case, Chad. Following each section, questions will be raised for further study in the eighties.

### The Writing Episode

Chad is a six-year-old first-grade child who has been writing for only two weeks. When Chad writes "the grts" (the good guys), the message is barely decipherable, yet it contains a major breakthrough for him, since in this instance it is the first time he is able to read back his message. This is but a small part of Chad's writing episode. A writing episode is defined here as encompassing all that a child does before, during, and after a single writing. In Figure 1, some of Chad's activity is shown on the first line.

The first line shows what letter the child actually wrote in relation to the second line, the language and sound generated by the child as he wrote. Simultaneous to the writing, Chad supplies facial gestures and varying distances to the papers. He also changes his work as he goes. As a beginning writer he changes mostly at the point of sound-letter correspondence and the shapes of letters. He does not yet edit for syntactic-semantic fit. Chad also reads as he writes, another important contextual feature in the process. And he listens to what he hears in reading out loud to see if he is where he thinks he ought to be in the message. Writing for Chad is more complex than it seems.

The context of Chad's composing is understood further by going back to what he was doing just before he started to write. In this instance he rehearsed unconsciously for the written act by drawing warfare between the "good guys" and the "bad guys" at the top of his paper. A series of action-reaction battles in the drawing were fought with eventual total destruction for everyone on the paper. When Chad was asked, "Tell me what you are going to write after you finish the drawing," he replied, "Wait and see." Broadening this context still further, data show that Chad answers with more complete information in the middle of drawing about what he will write. "Wait and see," is probably a staying action, the same as, "I don't know."

Moving ahead in time from the composing act, Chad rushes to the teacher when he finishes composing. Data show from other episodes that rushing to the teacher is an important sharing time for him. Chad stands next to the teacher who is seated at a round table in the back of the classroom. His left arm presses against hers as he leans, points to the paper, speaks to her with his face but eighteen inches from hers as he explains the episode on the paper. He can read some of the words, but the crude spellings of several have led to an evaporation of meaning. Still, he can at least get help from the drawing to communicate the main action of his writing.

A simple review of Chad's written product would have given a very limited explanation of what had occurred in the writing episode. The functions of various acts, the trials, would not have been understood in the same way as the direct observation of the composing of the episode itself.

More needs to be learned in the coming decade about what occurs within the writing episode. We are just beginning to get a sense of the ingredients in the process, but far more data are needed to explain how children function. We particularly need the data to begin to develop a theory of writing as called for by Martha King (1979). Ten questions are

**Figure 1**

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Line 1: Writing | | the | | g | | r | t | s |
| Line 2: Oral Language | the | | the | *guh* | guy | gut | t "the gut guys"<br>rereads | |

posed for research investigation in the eighties.

> What is the nature and function of oral language as it accompanies the writing process? How does this change within individual cases? Who are the children who do not use language to accompany the writing process?
>
> How does rehearsal change as children grow older? What is the nature of different rehearsals within a single child, across many children?
>
> What is the nature of syntactic and semantic decisions *within* child revisions? How do these decisions change with subsequent revisions of the same selection? How do these decisions change over a series of years within one child, across children of different ages?
>
> How do children use other children or the teacher to help them in their writing? How does this vary with different kinds of writers and in different environments?
>
> What is the context in the episode in which children change spellings? When do spellings become stabilized into a final form?
>
> Under what circumstances do children reread their writing? What is the nature of the reading act in writing, especially the reading act in relation to revision?
>
> How do children learn to use space on their paper when first writing or when doing advanced revisions? What are the changing spatial demands of writing?
>
> Under what circumstances do children use conventions, change them and grow with them over the years? Are there certain ways in which children use information that demand a broader repertoire of conventions?
>
> What types of hesitation, delay phenomena, are observed that might be connected with a concept of "listening" to the text?
>
> What types of left-right brain activity are indicated in the child's functioning in the writing process?

## The Broader Context of One Episode

One writing episode does not explain Chad's behavior. Other episodes are reviewed in relation to the one completed. The analysis of episodes reveals sequences of development over time. A simple example of a sequence is contained in children's general use of drawing in relation to writing. For most children, drawing precedes writing since the child needs to see and hear meaning through drawing. Later, as children know better what they will write, they illustrate *after* writing. In time they do not need to draw at all. There are exceptions based on intra-differences and different functions for the drawing.

Other contextual data are needed from Chad's own background to better understand what he does in the writing episodes. For example, interviews with Chad's parents and teachers show that Chad did not speak understandable messages until he was approximately four years of age. For many months after entering school Chad could not write. He did not understand the relationship between sound and symbol. He could not read his first attempts to write. There were too few cues to read them the next day. Still, his drawings were filled with information. He spoke at length with other children about the content of his drawings.

Other contextual information from Chad's life, gathered over time, are the following: changing concept of good writing, function of writing, sense and use of audiences, range and type of topics chosen, use of person, characterizations, territorial involvement of content, problem solving strategies in such areas as blocks, science, mathematics, etc. Sequences of development in each of these informational areas have their own context: What came before? What will follow? The sequence and interrelationship of each scheme provides more context for explaining behaviors in any one aspect of the composing process. Much of these data come from product analysis, child, parent and teacher interviews, and the analysis of writing episodes.

Far more needs to be done in these important areas during the eighties. A child's changing concepts of the writing process are particularly difficult to gather from interviews and ultimately depend on data from child functioning within the writing process itself, as well as from extensive analysis of the writing product. The following questions for research in the eighties are related to background information needed to understand a child's writing process:

> What is the relationship between children's concepts of the writing process and what they *do* during their writing?
>
> What is the relationship between children's oral language and what they *do* during the writing process?
>
> What is the relationship between children's processes of reading and how they read and revise their own texts?
>
> What is the writer's topical range and use of genre over time?
>
> How does the child use language to discuss the writing process? How does this change? How is this related to what the child does in the writing process?
>
> What is the writer's process of composing in different content areas?
>
> What is the *actual* audience range within the child's classroom, school, home? How does this relate to the child's concept of audience, use of audience?
>
> How much autonomy does the child exercise in the writing process?
>
> How do children change in making the transition from oral to written discourse?
>
> What is the relationship between a child's influence on the writing of other children (topic, skill, text, aid) and the child's own performance within the writing process?

## The Ethnographic Context

Chad's writing is not done in a vacuum. He is part of a social context in which children, teachers, administrators, parents, and a community carry out their values about writing. These values and practices affect what Chad does when he writes. They affect topic choice, interactions with other children, the teacher, and style of solving problems. It is difficult to know what aspects of the broader context affect the composing process, and the child's voice in the process. This is one of the least explored areas in writing research.

Examples of ethnographic research conducted in Chad's writing situation are the following:

*Communication Patterns.* Examine the contexts of Chad's writing by collecting and tracing written and oral communication along these routes: community, board of education, superintendent of schools, middle management, principal, teacher, Chad, Chad's parent. The contents and values expressed in patterns would be classified and assessed, and the effects of those messages would be studied. They would also be assessed open (answers solicited) vs. closed (directives without explanation or answers expected).

*Literacy Values.* How do adults in the same levels and routes mentioned above (Communication Patterns) practice and value their composing? What is the nature of the composing? What past experience in teaching has each had with learning to write? What, in fact, is the volume and type of their written communications?

## Research Questions for Teachers

The teaching of writing needs major focus for the eighties. But we can no longer afford the errors of the past when experimental designs were used to study specific teaching methodologies. Our preoccupation with the correct stimulus for writing, correcting and grading final products, or with exercises to increase sentence complexity need to be abandoned. So much more is now known about the nature of the process itself, children's development as writers, and the importance of the context of writing, that a new focus on the teachers is needed. Though much of our past research has focused on teacher methodologies, we have never actually studied the process of teaching writing. We have never studied even one teacher to know what ingredients are involved in teaching writing. Whereas the case study was the gateway to understanding the writing process and the ingredients involved in it, the same approach is now needed for the teaching process.

We are not starting from scratch. Extensive case study of children now puts us ahead of where we were with the first case studies of children in 1973. Over the last two years a research team from the University of New Hampshire has been observing the daily writing activity of young children. Because of the detailed focus on children through video and hand recording, there is an entirely different view of the importance and place of teaching. The situation is not unlike the artist who intently paints a landscape and becomes more acutely aware of the effect of weather on the emerging scene. The detailed observation of children is the beginning of understanding teaching, since teacher effects are seen more clearly in the context of child data. These kinds of data are also more easily reported to teachers since descriptions of the classroom, teacher activity, and the details of child activity before, during, and after composing are given.

The emphasis of the New Hampshire study, however, is on the child, with some data on teacher activify. The child still remains in context. Future studies need to focus on the teacher with peripheral data on the children. Extensive child data with transcripts of meetings with teachers suggest a host of questions that need to be researched in the eighties. None of these questions can be considered without extensive time spent in the classroom, with data gathered on both teachers and children and full consideration given to what happens in the child's process of writing. Since more context is needed for understanding the research questions posed related to teaching, a two column format is presented in Figure 2 with the research question in the first column, and discussion of hypotheses and preliminary data in the second.

Since so little data have ever been gathered on any of these questions, or on the process of teaching writing, they ought to be considered within the framework of case studies of competent teachers, those experienced with teaching writing, those willing to become involved in it for the first time. Detailed data gathering through video tapes, audio tapes, direct observations, and teacher and child interviews needs to be done. One of the best ways to gather the teacher case data is to do simultaneous case studies on children in the same environment. In this way the basic ingredients in teacher-child transactions can be examined more closely.

Figure 2

| Question | Discussion and Background |
|---|---|
| What do teachers do when they confer with children about their writing? | We need to describe in detail what is contained in the writing conferences of good teachers of writing. Also, teachers who are just starting to teach writing should be chosen so that their changing patterns of conferring with children can be recorded over time. We are speaking of case studies of specific teachers in a variety of settings. |
| How do teachers attend to children's papers in the writing conference? | Research conducted on this question will also respond to a host of other questions: How specific is the writing conference? How much did the teacher learn from the child in the conference . . . skills, information? How does the teacher give responsibility to the child or take it away during the writing conference? What is the relationship between the content of the writing conference and the child's subsequent activity in writing? These questions have been formulated from at least one to two hundred recorded conferences from the University of New Hampshire study of the writing processes of young children. |
| What is the number, frequency, and type of conference conducted in the classroom—daily, weekly, monthly, yearly? | We have very little knowledge about the patterns of teacher conferences with children. From our present study we see conferences of from thirty seconds to twenty minutes duration. Conference patterns change, but what are those patterns? |
| How do teachers change what they attend to in the writing conference over a half year, one year, two years? | We need to carefully monitor teacher changes with both experienced and inexperienced teachers (as in question 1). These changes need to be monitored with different kinds of children since some children are more difficult than others to maintain ownership of the paper where it belongs, with the child. This question will make inroads on issues of match between teaching styles and child learning styles. Also, it may get at the question of match between teacher and child composing styles. |
| How does the teacher help children to help each other with their writing? | Another preliminary finding from the New Hampshire study is that teachers who enable children to help each other, provide not only an important service in immediate child help, but a unique chance to learn more about writing by helping another person. Children in this situation are able to use language to talk about writing more specifically. Children who confer with the teacher in these types of rooms come to the conference already primed to take more responsibility for their own writing content. The procedures that teachers use to help children gradually take on more responsibility for self-help needs systematic study. |
| How does the teacher change the organization of the classroom to aid the writing of children? | There are many organizational plans that evolve as teachers gain experience in helping children to take more responsibility for their writing. The more choice and flexibility children have during the time for writing, the more structure and organization is needed. The process of providing a structure—first visible, then more invisible, needs more systematic study. |
| What types of writing does the teacher provide for children? | Children need to read the writing of others, and from the standpoint of their own authorship. This type of question examines the diet provided for children. The researcher questions: Is the writing the teacher's own? Other children's? Writers from children's literature? Child's own writing? |
| How much time does the teacher provide for writing? | The amount of time in relation to children's own writing episodes and patterns needs to be studied. What are the time provisions—daily, weekly, monthly, yearly? |

| | |
|---|---|
| How does the teacher use writing across the curriculum and in different genre? | Writing cannot be contained by the personal narrative alone. Since it exists to clarify meaning, it applies across the curriculum. The breadth of genre and content needs to be examined in relation to time provided for writing, conference patterns, different types of children in the study. |
| How does the teacher provide for the permanency of writing? | Much writing should last . . . for the sake of the child, other children, parents and the teacher. This question seeks to examine ways in which teachers provide for writing permanency through publication, collections of writing, writing folders, charts, etc. |

## Research Designs and Procedures for the Eighties

Researchers in the eighties need to draw from many fields if they are to broaden the contexts of their investigations. Procedures from linguistics, anthropology, and developmental psychology need to work their way into the territories needing investigation. Educators ought to acquire more background in these fields. Similarly, educators need to invite specialists to become more acquainted with the process of education in public institutions.

Research teams ought to be more interdisciplinary. A review of research of the last twenty-five years shows how insular writing research has become. In the past, the only persons to serve on doctoral committees outside of education departments were statisticians and linguists.

I am not advocating that writing research be turned over to outside specialists. The locus of research control must still remain with the educator who knows the context of the public school setting.

## Design and Procedures

Depth needs to be added through different uses of case, experimental, and ethnographic procedures *within the same study*. In short, the space-time dimensions of research must be expanded to include procedures in the same study that in the past have been used solely for one type of study alone. An example of such a study is contained in Figure 3.

In such a design, data are gathered simultaneously at four levels of investigation: intensive process data through direct observation of the child at Levels 1 and 2 over at least a year's time, and the full context of writing episodes are gathered from before a child writes until the child has had a response to his or her product. The child in Level 1 is a writer who gives more than the usual amount of information, involves a broader spectrum of development, and therefore merits more time from the researcher. Level 3 data come from the entire class in which Level 1 and 2 children reside. Some informal observations are taken from them but all of their products are classified or duplicated for examination. Finally, product analysis is given to four classes within the same school building, but also including each of the first three levels of the study. In this way product analyses of larger groups can be further investigated for their process implications in the case study data. Similarly, case data variables that appear to be pivotal can be examined through interventions or product analyses at Levels 3 and 4. To date, two studies have been done in this manner, Graves (1975), Graves, Calkins, Sowers (1978-80).

Depth must also be added through more intensive case studies with intra-differences explained through one case. One child's behavior is described within the context of at least one to three years. In this way the pattern of development within one variable or across variables can be examined and explained over a much longer period of time. Too often research contributes to a lottery philosophy of educating. That is, we look for similarities across children, ways of generalizing one child's behavior to aid other children. There is a value in this, but there is also a grave, potential weakness. We will look too quickly to see why the child before us is *the same* as other children rather than look at how the child is different. Or, if the difference is located, we seek to extinguish it in order to integrate the child into a homogeneous mass for more convenient instruction.

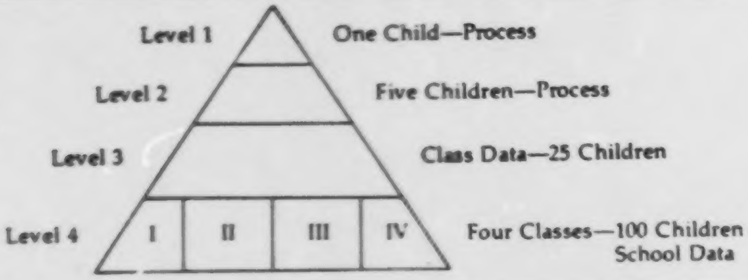
In short, we will overlook the one thing that makes the child before us unique. We will overlook the voice—the one experience or knowledge area the child knows well. Good teachers have responded to this uniqueness on an intuitive basis for years. Research needs to document intra-differences of the components that make children unique. Glenda Bissex (1979), in her study of Paul over a five-year period, is this type of study. Also, the child in Level 1 (Figure 3) is a potential type for study of intra-differences. Data gathered in such depth usually point the way to discovering new variables not seen in the larger data gathering. We cannot afford to be without such studies.

## Final Reflection

The recommendations for writing research in the eighties contained in this column are not meant to be exhaustive. Rather, they are intended to open territories needing investigation. They are particularly designed to increase the context of our knowledge in three major areas: 1) *Children:* What do children do when they write? What does the expansion of data within one life give us? How can the child's functioning within the broader ethnographic context be explained? 2) What do teachers do in relation to child growth? For too long the process of teacher change in relation to child change has been neglected. How are these related? 3) What new procedures are demanded for broadening the context of investigation?

An attempt to answer such questions should result in a new emphasis in writing research in the eighties. The next ar-

Figure 3



ticle on this subject will deal with the question, "How Will Writing Research Have Influence in the Eighties" in the April issue of *Language Arts*.

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# Research Update
# Where Have All the Teachers Gone?

Donald H. Graves
for the NCTE Committee on Research

Writing research in the 80s will go nowhere unless there is a different view toward teacher involvement by researchers. Furthermore, teachers must be equipped to conduct research of direct benefit to themselves. In the past teachers have been excluded from the process of writing research. Researchers have too often been in a hurry, tried not to "bother" teachers, gathered data, and left as unknowns. If this pattern continues, then the growth in writing process research outlined in the first article (*Language Arts*, November/December 1980) will be hampered, and the many recommendations made for needed research in the 80s (*Language Arts*, February 1981) cannot be implemented.

The base of research involvement must be broadened to include an active role by the public school teacher. When teachers become involved in research, researchers not only gather better data, but the context of research, the public school classroom, is enriched by the study itself. Teachers and researchers ought to know each other for the sake of the research and the children.

We need to dispel the mystique of research. For too long it has been maintained through irrelevant, context-stripping designs, and a language intended for the closed shop of other researchers. It is even doubtful if the intended audience of other professionals understands the language any better than the perplexed classroom teacher.

Teachers need to write. They not only need to write in order to understand the process they teach, but

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"Where Have All the Teachers Gone?" is the third in a series of three articles surveying writing research, research needed in the eighties, and how teachers need to be involved in research. The three articles have been adapted for *Language Arts* from a chapter in *Perspectives in Writing, K-8*, edited by Shirley Haley-James and published February 1981 by NCTE.

they also need to put into print their thoughts about the teaching of writing. Teachers who do this become different consumers of research information.

Even with the work of the National Writing Project where great stress is placed on the development of the teacher's own writing, there is not enough opportunity for most teachers to develop their own skills in the process. People who teach a craft must practice it. It would be unheard of for a teacher of piano to never play, or a ceramicist to say to a class, "Here is the wheel, throw the clay," without first demonstrating what the teacher practices daily. Teachers don't need to become professional, publishing writers, but they do need to be acquainted with the craft at a personal, practical level.

## Researchers in Residence—A Case Study

In the fall of 1978 three researchers began to observe children in the elementary schools of Atkinson, New Hampshire. They were there to observe "How and in What Order Children Developed as Writers." The two-year grant from the National Institute of Education focused on children, not teachers. The team resisted requests for formal writing workshops with the staff. The researchers would answer teacher questions about their children or the writing process.

The researchers had all been teachers and were published writers. Over coffee, at lunch, at breaks when gym, art and music were taught, teachers asked questions about their children and the relation of the data to their teaching. The teachers controlled the questions, when they used the data, and the teaching of writing in their classrooms. The researchers did not have a writing program.

In a short time the mystique of "research and researcher" was removed. Researchers were just as perplexed as teachers about certain children. From the beginning, the researchers wrote, shared findings with the teachers, and published. Teachers could see that they often knew more about their own children than the researchers. Nevertheless, both teachers and researchers learned from the children.

Teachers began to write. They demanded an in-service course in both writing and the teaching of writing. An outside consultant worked with the teachers. Two of the teachers took formal courses in writing at the University. Gradually most of the staff of fourteen teachers worked on their own writing. More importantly, the teachers began to collect their own information about the children. Researchers kept charts of data about the children, and shared them with the teachers. Teachers, in turn, began to keep their own charts, their own data systems, and from these data to write articles of their own.

Most of the teachers keep extensive records, the base of good data for their own research. One teacher records the contents of each writing conference, the patterns of spelling as children change throughout the year; another records the changing strategies of a child who has great difficulty in writing. They write about their information in such a way that they *show* other teachers what they do, as well as the data on which their judgments are based.

## An Example of Teacher Data-Gathering

Children in Mary Ellen Giacobbe's first grade classroom used spelling inventions the second month they were in school. By the end of the year the children had made extensive gains in reading, spelling, and writing. Mrs. Giacobbe had wondered throughout the year what the children might have done had she let them write the first month of school. The next year she decided to find out what the children could do in September. Mrs. Giacobbe writes:

> During the second week of school I administered a self-made writing test of twenty words. In choosing the words I tried to use as many different initial and final consonants and long and short vowels as possible. Fifteen of the words were one syllable and five were two syllable words.
>
> I worked with the children individually or in pairs. I gave each a piece of paper eight and one-half by eleven and one-half inches, sectioned into rectangles numbered one through twenty. I asked the children to write the word *rag* next to number one. I did not emphasize any sounds. I said the word as I would in normal conversation. I continued with the rest of the test in the same manner.

After ninety minutes of testing she was surprised by what the children wrote. Figure 1 shows data on four children for all twenty words. The four are typical of the range in the class of twenty-four children.

Mrs. Giacobbe gave the same twenty words in January to check progress and has since given the words to subsequent classes. Other teachers in her own building and visitors from schools in other states now use the words to sense the patterns of readiness children have for writing when they first enter school. Mrs. Giacobbe's work began when she wanted to find out something for herself. The work continued when other teachers found it useful to them. The data, of course, were very helpful to us in our study of the composing processes of first grade children. The data had immediate use for the classroom and

**Figure 1**

Spelling Patterns for Twenty Words during the First Week of School

| | rag | buzz | lid | six | game | nice | doctor | view | yellow | kiss |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jennifer | RAG | BIS | LeD | SiCS | GAM | NIS | DOCTR | VUW | YeLLO | KISS |
| Lisa | RAG | BAS | LED | SECS | GAM | NAIYS | DOCTR | VYU | YLO | KES |
| Bob | RAG | BSS | LD | S | GMA | N | DIr | VU | | CS |
| Mark | iA | BS | LED | SS | KM | NS | DT | UO | LO | KiSS |

| | camp | zero | hill | tack | five | pickle | muffin | wife | job | quick |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jennifer | KAP | ZARO | HAL | TAK | FIVE | PICL | MIFN | WIF | JOB | CWC |
| Lisa | KEP | SERO | HEL | TAC | FOYV | PECL | MFEN | WAIYF | GOB | COEC |
| Bob | CAP | SiO | HLLL | TAC | FA | PCL | MAF | WAF | [OP | CWC |
| Mark | KP | SRO | UL | TK | FF | PL | MFA | WAF | GB | KWK |

long-term use in tracing the development of children as writers.

Teachers who collect children's writing, keep careful records of writing conferences, as many of the teachers do in Atkinson, have ready-made banks of data useful to themselves and researchers who wish to know more about children. Teachers and researchers need each other, but on equal footing. Barbara Kamler and Judy Egan are examples of a researcher-teacher team as shown in the September 1980 issue of *Language Arts*, "One Teacher, One Child, One Classroom—The Story of One Piece of Writing."

The status of the Atkinson teachers has changed. They have become a community since they have shown through their own writing the nature of that community. They share stories about their own children, orally and in writing; they teach each other just as their children teach them; and they teach their administrator as well.

In a time when there is a shortage of teaching energy, these teachers even find time to write about it. They can do this because they have placed the responsibility for writing where it belongs—with the children. They believe that it is the child's responsibility to teach them about what they know. They help the child through extensive listening, confirmation, and questioning to share personal experiences, stories the child wishes to share. When the children lead, and teachers listen, not only is there a new professionalism with the child, but the teacher (with the child speaking and supplying the energy) has time to write down the information the children share. When children must assume a greater responsibility for information, drafting, and proofing, teachers in turn have the energy to publish and to review the data they have from conferences. Once teachers begin this approach to gathering information, they soon learn they can not teach without it.

When these teachers listen, gather data, write about it, share it with other teachers, travel to other communities to share data in workshops, they read research with a different voice. Doers of research, whether it be informal data gathering, small action projects, or year-long classifications of children's writing topics, are critical, active consumers of what happens in the field. They are interested in what is happening in their territory since they are part of the territory. Furthermore, since they observe children and their own actions in relation to them, they have a different view of theory. They realize that basic research on children's writing and development, and the theories of writing that emanate from the data are grounded in real children. They can be of help in their work with children, not ten years from now, but tomorrow.

Not every school system can have full-time researchers in its midst. There are few grants given by the National Institute of Education. But there is a middle ground that researchers, teachers, and administrators can examine together, that will give a new focus to the teaching of children and research for the 80s.

Professors of education need to spend more time in the only true laboratories, public school classrooms, to understand the role of the teacher, and the processes of learning. Perhaps the reason we researchers have neglected issues of learning context in our research for so long, is that we have spent so little time on the sites where experimental data have been gathered. Whether we were doctoral students, psychologists, or professors of education we have gathered research in absentia.

There are several options that local school systems and universities can consider together. The success of the proposed ventures is dependent on both professors and teachers learning from children *together*. It is only the information they have in common about the children, the writing they do together, that will determine the development of a research community.

1. Professors of education need to take more sabbaticals on site with teachers and children. Joint research projects can benefit teachers, professors, and the local school system.
2. Teachers can gather their own data during writing conferences, or review data patterns from children's writing collections. Many teachers have data that are very close to full research studies.
3. Teachers can spell each other to observe children during breaks. These are breaks that make a professional difference. They supply a different kind of energy.
4. School systems can hire resident writing professionals whose main task will be to "live in" selected classrooms to provide data about responding to children's writing. The resident professional must be both writer and researcher. This person will not only work with the staff on their own writing, but share data on the writing processes of children as they aid the teacher whom they serve.

## Final Reflection

In the past, research has been done at too rapid a pace. We can no longer zoom in on a research site, emerge like green berets from a helicopter, beat the bushes for data, and retire to our ivy-covered sanctuaries. Sadly, an increasing number of school systems have marked their schools as "off limits" to researchers—with good reason. Researchers, like poor campers, have not left their sites better than when they arrived. Pre- and posttest data have been gathered, a six-week intervention introduced, with the final data not reported to the school system. Administrators and boards express their feelings directly, "We don't want any researchers experimenting on our kids!"

Research that ignores context tends to be in a hurry, to avoid the human issues of the persons involved in the study. Research that broadens the base of context is automatically slower. Rarely is the study less than a full year. Although there are interventions included in the data gathering, much time is spent in describing children, teachers, and the research site. Researchers spend months in advance of data gathering becoming acquainted with staff and in making it possible for the staff to know them and participate where they are able. If researchers are to be guests in the classroom home of the teachers, and rent free, the teachers had better know the guests values and habits.

Our experience in the New Hampshire study indicates that the pace of persistent, thorough, yet slow-paced data gathering, has influence on the pace of teaching in the classroom. The teacher slows down and listens to the children, responds differently to the child's written drafts. Full descriptions of the context of child, family, and school make them aware of many other processes operating on the child's behalf. Finally, teachers are able to focus far more on what children *can do*. Researchers and teachers alike share in the amazement of child potential. Perhaps the focus of research in the 1980s ought to be: slow down, look at the full context of writing, involve teachers, and get to know the full potential of children and teachers.

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# Notes and Comments

## CHILDREN'S REWRITING STRATEGIES

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In a small New Hampshire school, three full-time researchers pull their chairs close to children as they work at their desks, easels and block castles. Through a grant from the National Institute of Education, Donald Graves, Susan Sowers and I watch sixteen children while they compose with shapes, colors, and most of all, with words. We will follow day-to-day changes in their composing process for two years. Through observations, video-tapes, interviews and interventions, we let the children tell the story of their composing.

Researchers need to pull their chairs alongside of children before they can isolate and investigate critical factors in writing development. We need to build a tentative developmental map of how children change as writers before we can raise questions and form hypotheses. We must identify and describe the *what* of children's writing before we can attempt to explain the *why*.

In our case-study research project, children continually remind us that constructing a piece of writing is a problem-finding, problem-solving activity. As we document the writing process of children, we also document their thinking process. Writing is hands-on thinking. Rewriting is manipulating thinking, it is thinking about thinking.

These notes describe four different kinds of rewriting used by third graders. They suggest possible reasons for the difference. They are written mid-way in our study, and they are an invitation to further research.

**Procedure** My focus on a few children led me to ask questions of all children in one classroom. I observed the composing process not only of the case study children, but also of their classmates. My observations involve 17 of the 20 children in one of the two third grades in which our research took place.

No studies exist which document young children's rewriting strategies. Therefore a significant portion of my task has been to develop procedures for eliciting and recording information on the composing process. The data presented come from:

1. *Case Study Observation:* On a day-to-day basis for a year, I observed four third graders while they wrote. The children were encouraged to think aloud as they drafted, conferenced and reread their work. I recorded their comments and behaviors, noting where they occurred within the process of a draft. The first column, below, comes from xeroxing Amy's draft and then adding numbers which correlate with the notes in column two.

*Twelfth Draft*

(1) (2)
I was sitting on the porch
(3)

watching ~~what~~ Patches
(4)
clean herself. "Me-ow"
I didn't see ~~Patches~~
(6)
(her) mouth open.
(5)

*Notes on Twelfth Draft*

1. Amy is still working on her 11th draft. She abruptly says, "This is all it'll have to be for now."
2. She gets out a new piece of paper and begins a 12th draft. She writes more neatly than usual.
3. She thinks about 'I was sitting' or 'I sat.' Choose 'I was sitting.'
4. Changes, as she writes, from 'watching what Patches was doing' in 11th draft, to 'watching Patches clean herself.'
   "I thought of this change yesterday when I was getting ready for recess and I decided to keep it in my mind until today."
5. Amy looks back and forth between drafts carefully.
6. Goes back and changes 'Patches' to 'her.'

2. *Observation of Sampling Other Children:* I observed all the children in the class informally during the year. After studying the folders and simulated rewriting exercises (see #4 and #5) of the class, I selected representative children to observe more closely. I especially observed behaviors during rewriting. These observations were done on several occasions but much less frequently than observations of the case study children.
3. *Interviews:* Interviews occurred mostly *in the midst of the composing process.* "Why'd you make this change?" "What are you planning to do next?" During intervals in the writing process, I asked more general questions. "What's different about your writing now?" "What does a person have to do to be a good writer?" "What's rewriting for?"
4. *Simulated Rewriting Exercise:* The children were given a paragraph and asked to copy it into their own writing. The content of the paragraph was familiar to all children for it was about their actual experience in writing class. After the children copied the paragraph, I worked with them in a one-to-one session.

"I'd like you to pretend this is a draft you just finished writing," I'd say. "Pretend you read it to your friends. They wanted you to tell what your teacher interviewed about," I said, pointing to the line which I was referring to.

Each time I asked a question, I pointed to the appropriate section in the draft. Some of my questions solicited information; some of my questions challenged the information in the paragraph.

My interest was not in their answers, but in what they did with the new information. Did they insert it into the appropriate section of their paper, or merely write it on the end of the piece? Did they change the pre-existing content in order to incorporate the new and sometimes conflicting information?

5. *Collections of Writing:* Charts were made of cumulative collections of each child's work. In order to explain the charting procedure, two of Andrea's pieces have been charted below.

| 1<br>Date | 2<br>Title | 3<br>Finished | 4<br># Dfts | 5<br>% New Dft | 6<br>% 1st Kept | 7<br>% Final=1st |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10/78 | Lin su | yes | 1 | 0% | 100% | 100% |
| 10/78 | Learning to Fly | yes | 4 | 50% | 50% | 5% |

In the *first column*, the writing pieces have been listed chronologically, using an approximate date. The *second column* gives a title for each piece.

*Column three* refers to whether the child wrote a final draft. During writing time, children must write, but they can choose to begin a different piece, or they can continue to work on a previous one.

*Column four* shows that Andrea did one draft of "Lin Su" and four drafts of "Learning to Fly." *Column five* shows that two of Andrea's four drafts of "Learning to Fly" (50% of her total number of drafts) are new. For the purpose of this article, a child writes a "new" draft if the child:

—begins the piece again, and writes at least 4 lines. (This includes recopying the piece.)

—writes about the same topic as the preceding draft, but doesn't refer to the earlier draft.

—rewrites the earlier draft, changing some sections and keeping others.

Andrea's first draft of "Learning to Fly" was a page of beginnings (leads). The leads do not each count as a separate draft because they are under four lines long. Her second draft is an exact copy of the selected lead. Nothing "new" was written so the draft does not count as a new draft. In the third draft, Andrea recopies the lead and then writes forty new lines. The third draft is called "new": Andrea's fourth draft is a neater version of her third draft. None of it is new material. Two of her four drafts are "new", and so 50% is entered into the fifth column of the chart.

*Column six* refers to the percentage of the first draft which appears in the final draft. This column shows that Andrea keeps 50% of "Learning to Fly" and uses it as 5% (column seven) of her final draft. *Column seven* shows that the kept section is only a small part of Andrea's longer final draft.

## Findings and Discussion

The children in this classroom write and rewrite. But rewriting is a conglomerate term. When children rewrite—when they make successive drafts—they may be recopying, or they may be making totally different drafts. *Rewriting* (drafting) does not necessarily involve *revision* (deliberate changes).

The data suggest that the third graders in this study can be grouped according to four kinds of rewriting:

### *Random Drafting*

These children write successive drafts without looking back to earlier drafts. Because they do not reread and reconsider what they have written, there is no comparison or weighing of options. Changes between drafts seem arbitrary. Rewriting appears to be a random, undirected process of continually moving on.

### *Refining*

For some children, rewriting means refining what they have already written. These children may copy a piece over and over. They may change spellings, neaten penmanship, add a few lines. But their subject and voice are determined by the first draft. Rewriting is a backwards motion of refining a draft. It is not a process of discovery.

### *Transition*

These children move between periods when they refine drafts and periods when they abandon drafts, continually beginning new ones. They sometimes appear to be Random Drafters, but they are closer to being Refiners. Like Refiners, these children can look back to assess and refine old drafts. But unlike Refiners, they are not content with their earlier drafts. When Transition children abandon old drafts and begin new ones, they show a restlessness which may lead them to become Interacters.

### *Interacting*

For these children, revision results from interaction between writer and draft, between writer and internalized audience, between writer and evolving subject. Children reread to see what they have said and to discover what they want to say. There is a constant vying between intended meaning and discovered meaning between the forward motion of making and the backward motion of assessing.

Each of these kinds of rewriting reflects a different level of time and space flexibility. For children in the first group, rewriting is an exclusively forward motion. These children do not have the flexibility to look back on their writing process. The next two rewriting groups—the Refiners and the Transition children—rewrite by using what can be described as a 'backwards' motion of returning to the draft. These children are able to look back at what they have done, but they do not have the Interacters' ability to shift between reader and writer, between critic and creator. The Interacters can not only shift between looking forward and looking backward, they can also view their draft from several perspectives, and juggle several concerns. They have a more flexible and controlled sense of time and space, and this affects their rewriting process.

These are tentative groupings. They are meant to be a groundwork for further research. They are meant to sharpen our questions as we continue to pull our chairs in and let the children surprise us.

In these notes, a representative child from each rewriting group is described and then data is presented on all the children who share a similar rewriting process. Each kind of rewriting is presented through both a representative case and through data on all children in the group. After each kind of rewriting is presented, it is discussed.

*Random Drafting.* Patti's folder bulges with scraps of unfinished stories, a paragraph about chasing boys, three leads on Brownies, a wrinkled paper entitled, "My New Coat." Her drafts are sometimes well worked over, with scratched out sections and added paragraphs.

The curious—and significant—thing is that even after Patti has reread and sometimes altered a draft of her writing, the next draft is done as an entirely new piece. Later drafts are often written on the back of earlier ones. She rarely looks between them.

Professional writers often write like Patti does when they want to find their subject or their voice. The difference is that these children never stop randomly drafting, they never make choices or establish closure.

Sometimes Patti's later drafts are more focused than her earlier ones. She may have recalled new details, or her thinking may have become more organized. Instead of beginning: "I like rabbits," she begins, "There are three reasons I like rabbits." But the changes are accidental. Patti does not deliberately learn from her previous drafts. Each draft is separate.

Patti is one of two children who fall into this kind of rewriting. There are three other children in the class whose folders were incomplete and therefore they were not part of the study. I suspect these children, like Patti, are always moving on to separate drafts and this is why their folders are incomplete. These statistics are for the two who did have complete folders. The figures represent averages which have been computed from charts of each child's collected writing.

| Name | 5<br>% New Dfts | 6<br>% 1st Dft Kept | 7<br>% Final Dft = 1st Dft |
|---|---|---|---|
| Patti | 99 | 10 | 9 |
| Tracey | 100 | 11 | 11 |

Both Patti and Tracey continually write 'new' drafts (see definition of 'new' on page 333). Column five of the chart shows that all of Tracy's drafts over the year are classified as 'new' and 99% of Patti's are 'new.' Column six shows that neither child keeps much of her first draft, using it in the final draft. Patti keeps only an average of 10%, and Tracey, 11%, of the first draft. For both children, this kept section comprises very little (9-11%) of the final draft.

In the simulated rewriting exercise, Patti and Tracey were asked to add bits of information into their paragraph. Neither of them reread the original paragraph in order to insert the information into the appropriate place. Neither reconsidered the original sequence of information in light of the new material. They merely added the information onto the end of the piece—where it did not belong.

The kind of rewriting these children use shows their time and space framework. Patti and Tracey continually operate in present time. They do not look back and reconsider what they have done. What is finished is over, and they are continually moving on. When Patti finishes a draft, it is as if she's saying, "Here's another . . . if you don't like it, I'll do more . . ." She writes one way; she writes another way. There is a randomness to her successive tries, and a sense of on-goingness, of forward motion. Her drafts are open to change—to arbitrary, unselective change. The all-purpose, influx nature of Patti's writing process means she willingly messes her paper; scratching out lines, changing sections. Yet Patti's drafts more closely resemble a child at play then an adult at craft. There is neither comparison nor choice behind Patti's redrafting process.

Patti and Tracey continually use the present tense, the now. Their time and space framework isn't flexible enough for them to travel backwards in time and reconsider their early decisions. Nor do they look ahead enough to consider a potential audience's need for sequencing and order.

Temporal inflexibility becomes spatial inflexibility. Because these children can't shift back to earlier times and replay their process of writing; they can't see the links between one draft and another. A different angle on the subject, a different amount of detail, a different sequence, means the piece is entirely new. Patti and Tracey don't view space as flexible enough for a single piece of writing to exist in many forms.

Piaget claims that the ability to reverse an operation is a hallmark of the developmental sub-period called concrete operations. Between the ages of seven and eleven, children usually develop the ability to follow a line of reasoning back to where it started. Reversibility of thought, according to Piaget, is closely connected with changes in a child's ability to classify things according to several characteristics, and to relate classes with each other. Piaget also groups the onset of reversible operations with a new ability to assume the viewpoint of others.

Patti and Tracey's rewriting seems to indicate that neither of them has obtained the reversibility which Piaget suggests as one characteristic of the sub-period of concrete operations. Their writing process suggests the temporal and spatial rigidity of a pre-operational child who can't replay a process in his mind, consider several classifications at once, or take viewpoints other than his own.

*Refining*. Across the table from Patti, Alan works on the fourth draft of his "Baseball Cards." It is the same as his first draft except his letters are more square, and he has corrected a spelling, added a detail, and changed a phrase.

Since September, Alan has written an average of 3.9 drafts for a piece of writing, but his content and structure rarely change from draft to draft. He makes small changes in language, but never independently revises to find a different perspective on his subject or to change his focus. Only an average of 48% of Alan's drafts are classified as new drafts, and over the year an average of 97% of his first drafts appear in the final draft.

Although Alan often includes more details in later drafts, he doesn't treat a draft as a working manuscript. He doesn't use arrows or starred inserts.

Seven (41%) of the 17 third graders studied fit into the Refining Group. A child's rewriting process falls into this group when it fits at least three of four criteria:

Average % of drafts finished: 100%
Average % of drafts which are new: 40 - 50%
Average % of first draft in final draft: 75%
Average % of final draft which is first draft: 80%

The children listed below satisfy at least three of the four criteria. The statistics show year-long averages. They do not show the flux along the way. Nor do they show the fact that most children are moving from less to more rewriting over the course of the year.

| Name | 4<br>% Finished | 5<br>% New Dfts | 6<br>% 1st Dft Kept | 7<br>% Final Dft = 1st Dft |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chip | 100 | 60 | 83 | 81 |
| Steve | 100 | 66 | 84 | 80 |
| Shawn | 100 | 56 | 86 | 75 |
| Larry | 100 | 50 | 93 | 92 |
| Alan | 100 | 48 | 97 | 77 |
| Jon | 75 | 49 | 75 | 86 |
| Mike | 57 | 83 | 92 | 99 |
| Jen | 70 | 45 | 75 | 86 |

Alan and the other Refiners rewrite differently than the Random Drafters. The following chart contrasts Patti (Random Drafting) and Alan (Refining.)

| Name | 4<br>% Finished | 5<br>% New Dfts | 6<br>% 1st Dft Kept | 7<br>% Final Dft = 1st Dft |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Patti (Random Drafting) | 30 | 99 | 10 | 9 |
| Alan (Refining) | 100 | 48 | 97 | 77 |

Column four shows that Alan writes a final draft for 100% of his early drafts. In contrast, Patti completes the writing process for only 30% of her drafts. Column five shows that whereas Alan's drafts are 'new' 48% of the time, Patti almost always writes 'new' drafts. Column seven shows that Patti keeps an average of 10% of her first drafts. Alan, on the other hand, keeps 97% of his first drafts and adds onto it to make it into a final draft.

When Refiners were asked to add specific information into a given paragraph, they did look back. Many reread the paragraph several times. Most of them struggled with where and how they could insert the suggested information. An interview with a child in this category might look like this:

Researcher: Pretend this is your draft. Read it over and see if there is anything which you think should be changed.
Child: I'd leave it just the way it is.
Researcher: (Points to draft) Up here you say your teacher interviewed in front of you. What did she interview about?
Child: X-rays. She brought in X-rays.
Researcher: Do you think that's important information? Should you put it in?
Child: I don't know. I don't know where to put it. (rereads) I *would* say, "Writing class this year began the day our teacher brought in X-rays and wrote about them in front of us."
Researcher: OK, put that in.
Child: Where? On this paper? (takes new sheet)
Researcher: Wherever you think. Do what you would do if this were your draft and you were fixing it up.
(Child writes a new piece on a separate sheet of paper.)

Children from this level showed varying degrees of discomfort over how to change the draft before they resorted to doing it over. Some of them copied parts of the original paragraph. Most of them ignored the first draft completely and wrote the new one without looking back.

Alan's ability to look back and his struggle over how to insert information into the piece suggest that he—and other children in this group—has a broader and more flexible time and space framework than the Random Drafters. Alan appears more ready to revise than Patti.

Yet children from both groups lack the flexibility and control of time and space which is needed to deliberately change the content, design or voice of their pieces. For Patti, the problem was in looking back. Alan, however, can circle back and think about a piece which is already completed. But Alan can't use looking back as a means to push ahead. Only Interacters have a flexible and controlled perspective which allows them to continually shift between assessing and building, between looking back and looking forward.

Looking back does not require the ability to shift gears—the flexible perspective—which a child needs in order to reconsider and alter what he has done. In order to see other options for a piece, a child has to replay the process of writing it; he has to read what he has written as if the choices were not already made, as if the ending was not already written. Alan seems unable to do this.

When Alan was told, in the simulated rewriting exercise, to add specific information into his piece, his rewriting process still did not involve considering options or making substantive alterations in the first draft. Alan seemed unable to view his original paragraph as a flexible entity.

Refiners, for the most part, do not use arrows to move paragraphs, or codes (/*x) to insert lines. They rarely cross out sections of their papers. Each draft is written as if it were final. For these children, print is not a revisable medium.

Do Refiners view print as unrevisable because they do not have the abstract thinking skills necessary to see ways to alter their original draft? Do they view print as final because they cannot picture that an arrow or a code symbolizes a different sequence or design for their piece?

On the other hand, the inflexible nature of the Refiners' media may in part be the *cause* as well as the *result* of their inability to consider other options for a piece. When print is seen as unrevisable—as being like magic marker instead of like clay—then children do not have the opportunity to physically lay out their options. If they can't cut up their page and lay it out in a different order, then they need abstract thinking skills in order to consider other ways to sequence what they have written. If written words are final, then revision must be abstract.

Piaget points out that physical activity can become the groundwork for abstract mental concepts. If Alan built and rebuilt his writing with his hands, would he develop the ability to visualize his piece in many forms? This requires more investigation.

*Transition.* Robie fit into the Refining Group until Christmas. He finished a final copy of 86% of the drafts he began, and an average of 79% of his first drafts reappeared in his final draft.

After Christmas, however, none of his writing seemed good to Robie. "It's all terrible," he said, as he began one piece after another. For three months Robie hasn't done a final piece of writing. He writes one draft after another and gets discouraged. This is his last piece of writing, retrieved from the garbage.

> It's boring to write about nothing. You think about everything. You say, "They're boring." I want to write but when I write something, I crumple it up and throw it away. Then the teacher comes over and says, "Where are your starts?" I say, "I'll get them," because I know we're supposed to save even the awful stuff. I go to the garbage and get them out. Then I start a new piece and tear it to pieces.

Jason, Diane and Kristin, like Robie, have moved between extremes of making no major changes after their first draft, and of continually drafting totally new pieces. This chart shows the way children in this category move between extremes.

| 1<br>Name/Date | 3<br>% Finished | 5<br>% New Dfts | 6<br>% 1st Dft Kept | 7<br>% Final = 1st |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jason | | | | |
| 9-12/78 | 87 | 100 | 86 | 86 |
| 1-3/79 | 40 | 100 | 35 | 35 |
| Robie | | | | |
| 9/12/78 | 86 | 76 | 79 | 79 |
| 1-3/79 | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| Diane | | | | |
| 9-11/78 | 100 | 55 | 98 | 65 |
| 11-12/79 | 20 | 89 | 25 | 17 |
| Kristin | | | | |
| 9-12/78 | 80 | 76 | 35 | 35 |
| 1-3/79 | 100 | 69 | 77 | 69 |

When these children were asked to add information to a paragraph, they all reread the paragraph and struggled to fit the information in where it belonged. Two of the transition children eventually rewrote the piece in order to fit the information in, and the other two tried to squish microscopic letters between the lines so as to add the information without 'messing' the piece.

As a Transition child, Robie has reached a stage where he is not content to refine and recopy early drafts. Now he appears at first glance to be a Random Drafter. He continually abandons pieces, writing entirely new drafts. A closer look, however, shows that his rewriting process is very different from the Random Drafters. Rewriting, for Random Drafters, is a forward process of continually moving on. For Robie, writing involves the 'backwards' motion of assessing what he has done. When Random Drafters were asked in the simulated rewriting exercise to add specific information into their pieces, they did not reread the original paragraph, and they did not struggle to fit the information in where it belonged. The Transition children, on the other hand, all looked back and found a way to insert information into the apppropriate places.

There seem to be a variety of resons why Refiners are no longer content to merely refine a draft. For Becky, the need to continually try a new draft, a new piece, coincided with her parents' divorce. For other Transition children, their new restlessness seems to result from having developed higher standards for themselves.

Robie is a good example of the frustration which Revisers can experience when they are able to look back and assess their work, but are not able to use their self-criticism towards significantly improving their work. I suspect many Revisers will move into this transition group in time. As children develop high standards for themselves and become more self-critical, they become more and more frustrated with what they have done, and more and more unwilling to reread, recopy and refine what they view as 'lousy' to begin with. They will want to throw their writing away, and to begin again (and again, and again.) Or they won't want to write at all.

Psychologist Howard Gardner (*New York Times*, March 23, 1979) writes

> Indeed, I suspect that [illegible] ive period" during the years

> preceding adolescence. The future artist needs to acquire skills at a rapid rate so that, by adolescence, he is already accomplished in his craft. If he is, then he can withstand the rise in critical powers . . . and still conclude, "I'm not that bad."

*Interacting*. "I don't think about titles for my piece until I've written enough drafts to find out what I'm writing about," nine-year-old Andrea says. Like professional writers, Andrea discovers what she has to say by seeing what she has said. She puts print onto the page in order to get her hands on it. "I don't know if this part's good, but I'll put it down so I can see," Andrea will say. She reads the section out loud, hearing and looking at her words as they lie on the desk in front of her. She may circle a line, saying, "This gives me an idea for something better." The line is rewritten several times. As Andrea toys with the words at hand, she experiments with the direction and voice of her whole piece.

Amy and Gina, like Andrea, write drafts in order to interact with them. They do not only rewrite drafts—they revise them. Revision for these children is a hands-on rethinking process. Choices emerge from tension—between writing for information and writing for grace, between inclusion and focus, between intended meaning and discovered meaning.

These statistics are taken from collections of all the Interacters' writing from the whole year, including the first months when they did little content revision.

| Name | 4 % Finished | 5 % New Dfts | 6 % 1st Dft Kept | 7 % Final Dft = 1st Dft |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Amy | 75 | 80 | 51 | 36 |
| Andrea | 100 | 84 | 60 | 60 |
| Gina | 55 | 75 | 44 | 45 |

When these children were asked to read the paragraph in the simulated rewriting exercise, they immediately asked if they could change parts of it. One change led to another. Arrows, lines, stars and carets were used. Here is part of the transcript from Andrea's revision of the piece.

> **Andrea:** The beginning is hard to understand.
> (She draws an arrow and rewrites it at the bottom of the page.)
>
> **Andrea:** I'd explain this part, tell why it was fun.
> (At the bottom of the page she draws a line underneath the first rewritten section and now rewrites this part.)
>
> **Andrea:** I'd explain what we did in groups.
> (She does this at bottom of page, and uses a sumbol to show where it fits into draft.)
>
> **Andrea:** Wait, let me see how it is.
> (She rereads it with the changes she's made.)

Although Andrea, Gina and Amy are only nine-year-olds, their revision process is much like the process professional writers experience. Donald M. Murray, a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, describes this process:

> While the piece of writing is being drafted, that writing physically removes itself from the writer, and the writer interacts with it, first to find out what

> the writing has to say, and then to help the writing say it clearly and gracefully.

Like Professional writers, when Andrea rereads, she cycles between assessing and discovering. Sondra Perl (New York University, Education Quarterly, 1979) describes the back and forth motion of the composing process.

> It can be thought of as a kind of "retrospective structuring;" movement forward occurs only after one has reached back, which in turn occurs only after one has a sense of where one wants to go. Both aspects, the reaching back and the sensing forward, have a clarifying effect. . . But constructing simultaneously involves discovery. . . .

This shifting of perspective and intent requires a controlled time and space framework which neither Refiners nor Random Drafters exhibit in their rewriting. Interacters, however, can sense ahead to see where their line or paragraph may lead them, and they can sense backwards to reconsider choices they have made. Interacters are able to control their perspective and direct their thinking.

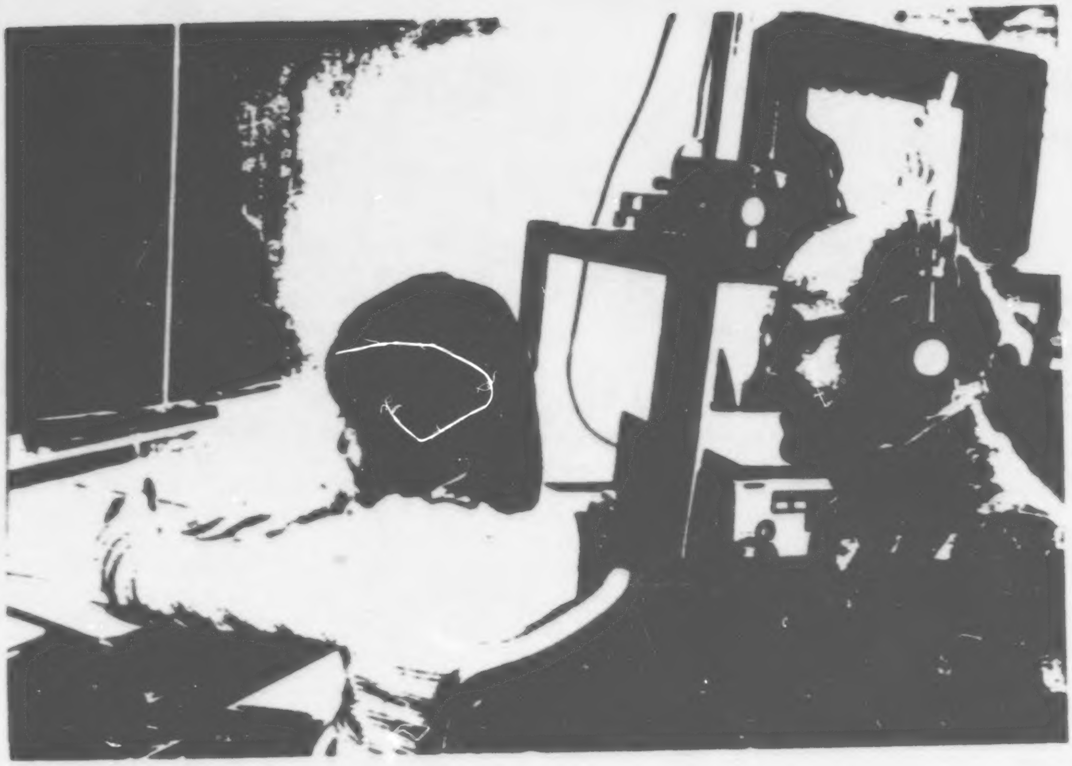
The Interacters in this classroom did not always revise like professional writers. Early in third grade, Andrea wrote twenty-six pages in a story without making any content revisions. Her revision process resembled the Refiners, until her teacher gave her permission to marr her page, and showed her how to use arrows to insert information. This was not a private lesson. Alan, too, and all their classmates, were encouraged to use drafts as working manuscripts. But Andrea, unlike Alan, was ready to hear the lesson. She was ready to move beyond refining.

Soon Andrea was using arrows, carets, and scratching out to reshape and refocus her writing. A first, every option she considered was put onto the page. It was as if she needed the physical act of laying out her choices. Later, I watched Andrea's revision move from overt to covert.

Teachers and researchers need to look closely at Andrea and other Interacters in order to develop a map of how children change as writers. Have other Interacters, like Andrea, first been Refiners? What sequences did they go through in learning to interact with their drafts?

**Summary** All the third graders in this classroom draft and redraft their writing. But they do not all share the same rewriting process. Some children are Random Drafters; others only Refine what they write; others Interact with their drafts in order to discover and to clarify what they mean to say. Each kind of revision seems to involve a different level of time and space flexibility, with Random Drafters as the least flexible because they do not look back at what they have done as they redraft. Refiners are a level above this because although they do look back, they cannot shift back and forth between looking back and pushing forward. Transition children may be a level higher, for they seem to be straining to substantially improve their drafts.

These tentative groups offer an invitation to further research. We need to watch more children as they rewrite, and see if the groupings apply to them. We need to observe children over a span of several years, and see whether they move from one kind of rewriting to another. Above all, we need to continue to pull our chairs in, and let children show us the story of their composing.



# 1. Patterns of Child Control of the Writing Process*

*Donald H. Graves*

CHILDREN WANT TO WRITE. For years we have underestimated their urge to make marks on paper. We have underestimated that urge because of a lack of understanding of the writing process, and what children do in order to control it. Without realising it we wrest control away from the children and place road blocks that thwart their intentions. Then we say, 'They don't want to write. What is a good way to motivate them?'

Children show us how they seek to control writing when they go about composing. They show us their stumbling blocks and the orders in which they grow in the writing process. They don't show with any one behaviour, nor in an antiseptic laboratory setting. Rather, they show us their growth patterns over a long period of time and in the setting where they normally function, the classroom. If we are going to help children, and not stand in the way of their gaining control of their own writing, we need to become familiar with what they do when they write. This evening I will report on two areas of data from our two year study of how children gain control of the writing process, 'Children's Transitions from Oral to Written Discourse' and 'Children's Development in Revision'.

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*Address to the Third International Conference on the Teaching of English, Sydney, Australia, 19 August 1980

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Three researchers, Susan Sowers, Lucy Calkins and I, have just completed two years observing sixteen children in a small rural school in new Hampshire, U.S.A. The sixteen children were chosen because of their differences in ability. Some hardly knew how to hold a pencil in first grade whereas some third graders were capable of writing eight to ten pages of a story. The children were followed in two clusters: (1) grades one through two and (2) grades three through four. In this way we were able to map how children grew in control of the writing process over the first four years of school.

The sixteen children were observed directly in the classroom. That is, we did not gather information unless the teacher asked the children to write or the child chose to write. Information was gathered by hand recording or video taping child behaviours during the writing process. We also used interviews, structured interventions, and the analysis of children's writings. Everything that the children wrote in any subject area was xeroxed during the two years. In the main, the researchers attempted to gain information with the least interference to the children.

Still, we bear no illusions. The presence of the researchers had great influence. It is impossible to have three guests in a home for two years, every day, and not have an effect on the owners or residents. We had a specific policy of not conducting workshops with staff, or consciously seeking to change teacher direction. We had this policy because we wanted to be good guests. If teachers, administrators, or parents wanted to ask about what we we were doing, we would be happy to answer, or share our data on request. My suspicion is, that because we took this stance, we had many more professional-type questions than might ordinarily be expected. In a way, we ended up having more influence on environment than might be expected.

In spite of this influence we did not feel our objectives would be lost — that is, determining how children would grow in their control of the writing process. Our theory (and I believe the data holds us up) was that if teachers were comfortable with the teaching of writing, knew more about it, and responded effectively to the children, a wider range of development would ensue. In turn, we would gather more information. Furthermore, the *order of development would not be changed*, the order of problems solved would be basically unchanged, even though the rate of solution might be accelerated.

Since our research was designed to find out 'what' was involved in the growth of children's control of the writing process, more than 'why', we felt secure with this arrangement. One other very helpful outcome of this approach to research was that teachers themselves became collaborators in the research project. Since they maintained control of their teaching they became quite aggressive in stating their opinions about writing and the research data. Major contributions were made by the teachers. On countless occasions they had indispensable observations and records on the children.

## *Making the Transition from Speech to Print*

There is much for children to learn to control in writing that is very different than speech. They must supply the context, write in a certain direction, learn to control the space-time dimensions of writing on a flat surface, understand what the medium of writing can do, know the relation between sound and symbols, know how to make the symbols, learn to put symbols in a particular order, and while composing one operation understand its relation to the entire order of what has been and will be in the message and compose in a medium where the audience is not usually present.

When children first write they are fearless. Egocentricity has its own protective cloak. Children are merely concerned with getting the marks on the paper and usually getting it down for themselves. Children are quite pleased with their own competence and they experiment fearlessly with the new medium given a small amount of encouragement. Although children share work with others, this work is usually done for themselves. The behaviours displayed during writing are very similar to other play behaviours. Fortunately children are not aware of all the transition steps they are making from speech to print. The child is a delightful pragmatist and seems to be saying, 'I want to get this writing down. I'm doing it because I want to and what I am putting down is not only interesting to me but to others as well'.

Children's attempts to control the conventions of writing are marked by many holdovers from speech. For example, in speaking, the context is usually supplied by the parties to the communication. Charles and Edward are working in the block area and Charles wants Edward's curved block. Charles merely points to the curved block and says, 'Give me that one'. But when Charles writes he must provide the setting through the words he supplies. Charles doesn't know how to provide the setting, the context for his writing. Instinctively he does much of this through drawing before he writes. The drawing provides double duty. On the one hand it provides the setting for the text, on the other it serves as a rehearsal for what he will write.

Although speech is directional, compared to the specifics of letter following letter on the printed page, it is non-directional. When children first write their messages go in many directions. They may start in the middle, lower right, or upper left of the page and proceed in column form or diagonally, depending on the whim of the writer. If the child is aware of word separation, words may follow in column form, looping diagonals, even in a circle. In either case the child is aware that letters follow letters. Breaks for words are done by more advanced writers, again reflecting a written feature, since most words are run together in conversation — as do most words first written by the children.

Teachers permit most of the first grade children in our study to learn spelling via spelling inventions. That is, the child spells the word the way it sounds. Thus, from the first day children are able to use whatever sound-symbol relationships they know to produce messages. At this point it appears that a child who knows six sound-symbol relationships (usually consonants) can begin to write. And they do. This year on the first day of school Mrs Giacobbe, one of the first grade teachers, passed out bound, hard-covered books with the child's name in embossed letters on the outside. She merely said, 'Write'. Even though thirty percent of the children had had no preschool experience they all wrote in their fashion. Some drew, others wrote their names, some put down numbers and letters, and about five wrote in sentences. The important thing is that none of the children believed they couldn't write.

Spelling inventions make it possible for children to control their messages from the first day of school. In addition, our data show that the words evolve from crude spellings to greater refinement. Susan Sowers, research associate on the project, has taken all words used by different cases, traced and dated their spelling evolutions during their first year in the study. The following is an example of a word tracing:

| *Toni's Pattern* | | | *Sarah's Pattern* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11/10 — | LC | — Like | 11/20 — | FLLAOWZ | — flowers |
| | LAT | — liked | | FLLAWRZ | |
| 12/8 — | LOCT | — liked | | FLLAWR | — flower |
| 12/19 — | L | — like | 1/11 — | FLAWRS | |
| 4/10 — | LICT | — liked | 6/1 — | FLOWERS | |
| | KLIC | — like | | | |
| 5/14 — | LIKE | | | | |
| 5/21 — | LIKE | | | | |

At first the children feel little control since they know too few sound-symbol relationships to provide enough cues to recognise it again. Toni's 'LC' or 'L' above for *like* may be difficult to read at a later time. On the other hand 'LICT' gives more cues. It is an important moment when the child is able to compose, and read back his information from the page. In several instances we were able to be present with our video cameras when the child first realised he had the power to read his own message. 'I don't know how I do-ed that,' one child said.

Putting symbols in order is a difficult task for many children. The ordering of symbols is quite dependent on the speed with which a child recognises sound-symbol relationships from his own speech and the speed with which the letter is written. Sometimes the process is so slowed down by the difficulty the child has in retrieving the letter unit from his own speech that the full context of the message is lost. In figure 1, notice how Jamie makes sounds to produce the correct sound-symbol relationship, yet must continually reorient himself to where he is in the message. Jamie produces the message so slowly that the text is obliterated by the next sound-symbol he encounters. He then must reread from the beginning each time in order to add the new letter in a word. The first line in figure 1 indicates the point at which the letter was written in relation to the second line, the sounds produced by the child.

Figure 1 shows just how much language and sound Jamie must produce to sequence the letters for his message, 'A tornado went by here now'. It took him fifteen minutes to write his *unassigned*

*Figure 1:* Jamie's Composing

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| WRITING LINE | A | | | X | N | | | |
| SOUND LINE | T | T | T | N | Ae tonaido | D | D | D |
| COMMENT LINE | | | | erases<br>M<br>makes an<br>N | (tornado) | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| WRITING LINE | D | | | | | | | | | A |
| SOUND LINE | D | D | Ae tonaido | Ae | oo | au | Ae | To | na | do |
| COMMENT LINE | Stops to check letter chart | | | | | | | | | |

message. How easy it is to assume that Jamie struggles because he must produce a product. Jamie doesn't know he is supposed to be having difficulty. Jamie had just seen an account of a tornado's destruction on television and wanted to write about it. Jamie wrote this message in December at the bottom of a drawing he had already composed on tornados. Note how few cues are in this message for Jamie to read. In fact, he could not read the sentence, only 'tornado'.

Most young writers who make the transition from oral to written discourse must produce language and sound when they write. The following are some of the different types recorded thus far from our video transcripts:

1. *Sounding* to probe for sound-symbol relation.
2. *Sounding* to 'break off' a phonemic unit from the word under attack.
3. *Rereading language* for reorientation in the composing unit. The child must hear where he is in the text. The difficulty or length of time spent on the composing operation determines how much the writer must reread.
4. *Conversations with friends:* 'This monster is going to eat up all the good guys'.
5. *Procedural language:* 'Now what am I going to do? No, this isn't right. I need to change it.' Procedural language is a more advanced form of transition from speech to print.
6. *Advanced statement of the text:* The child says the text in order to sense the appropriateness of the current word. 'He *cast* the line into the stream.' The child is now writing 'cast' but wants to make sure it fits correctly into the rest of sentence. This is very different from Jamie who has to say everything *before* the current operation. 'A tornado come *by*.' 'By' is the word under draft but is determined syntactically by all that has preceded it, not by what may lie ahead.

7. *Conversations before and after the composing:* Not only is the child speaking during the composing, but language surrounds the entire written event. *Before:* 'I'm going to write about monsters today. And you know what, the good guys are going to lose.' *After:* 'I'm finished, Mrs Giacobbe, and everybody's killed. Look at 'em here, all burned up. See, this ray gun (pointing to the picture, not the text) cooked every one of 'em.'

In summary, the amount of language a child must produce before, during and after the written event is paramount. Beginning writers show through voice alone that writing is much more of a *speech* event than a writing event. A careful assessment of the nature of language the child supplies also gives us a picture of where the child is in his control of the writing process. These are data that make it possible for the teacher to help the child gain, and maintain control of his own writing.

As children gain more distance on the writing process they deal with new issues in making the transition from speech to print. Children speak less, make fewer vocalisations, and show more prosodics in their writing. That is, more speech forms appear in the writing. Ask the child to read while you observe his paper. The child will show with his voice how he uses prosodics. Examples of some of the prosodics are the following:

capitalisation of important words — 'Jumped'
capitalisation of the entire word — 'The fish BIT!'
blackening in important words, capitalisations
underlining important words.

Children also place more sound in their text through the use of interjections, dialogue, and exclamation marks.

These features enter texts toward the end of the first grade. They come at a point when children grow in audience sense, gain skill in reading, and become interested in conventions. All three of these factors seem to occur simultaneously. They are accompanied by child statements that show distance, yet show a disturbance about their new lack of control in composing: 'This is stupid. This isn't what I want. I used to be able to write good, but I can't anymore. I don't like the sound of this.'

Later as children gain more control of their information, realise that the data are strong enough to support themselves without prosodic markers, the markers fade. At this point children have usually moved into much more advanced uses of revision, sustaining a single selection over several weeks. New levels of control have been reached. The child writes to find out more what he means. The writing, as we shall see in Lucky Calkins data on revision, becomes clay, is malleable, and doesn't need such explicit speech markers.

*Summary of Principles.* A number of principles emerge in reviewing how children gain control of making the transition from speaking to writing:

- At first children need to hear and see what they mean. They control their writing through drawing and speaking as they write, and in discussing the writing with friends and the teacher. Writing is more speech than writing.
- As children gain distance on the process of relating sounds to symbols, and handwriting issues are put behind them, they become more dissatisfied with their text and look for new ways to insert speech features.
- At first writing is a highly egocentric exercise. Later, as the child gains more distance on the text and other children provide different responses, he realises the message needs to be changed.

### *Children's Development in Revision*

When children revise they demonstrate their changing visions of information, levels of thinking, what problems they are solving, and their level of control over the writing process. Revision is not only an important tool in a writer's repertoire, but is one of the best indices of how children change as writers. For this reason, the data on revision has been one of the most important aspects of our study of children's writing.

Consistent with transitions from speech to print, children first revise their drawings because the drawings are more important. If children feel their drawing is accurate, the text is seldom changed. Simple changes in syntactical accuracy, changing words because of the way they are formed on the page, or the addition of words for the sake of feeling are typical of first revisions.

At first children write for the sake of writing. They enjoy putting marks on paper. Their composing behaviours are play-like. The decision to write, the composing and completion of a selection may all occur in the space of ten to fifteen minutes. The child does not look back. Attempts to 'revise' the completed work with the child are sometimes met with diffidence or polite participation. The concept of the work as a message, usable at another place and time, is not necessarily understood by the child.

For this reason it is all the more important for the teacher to 'revisit' the writing through the give and take of an oral conference. The conference becomes the bridge between past and present in which the child gains distance on the content and the concept of what writing can do. Furthermore, the conference is an invaluable source of information for both the teacher and child. Conferences run from three to twenty minutes. Transcripts of hundreds of teacher-child conferences over the two year period have given us a valuable profile of the child's control of the writing process. Barbara Kamler of Riverina College at Wagga Wagga, who just spent six months with us at the research site, has written a very important article* for the September issue of *Language Arts* (NCTE), in which she documents myriads of influences on one child's written selection as it developed

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*The article is reproduced on p. 73 of the present book. —*Ed.*

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over a two to three week period. Her work closely documents the many functions of the language conference through actual transcripts between teacher and child and the child with other children.

The language conference that focuses on the child's paper is the cornerstone of children's revision. As the teacher revisits the child's paper, listens to the voice of the child as the paper is read, or notices the child's uneasiness about some information, the seeds of the child's desire to revise are observed.

Children wish the new information were in the text when they have chosen a topic that they feel is an important one in their own lives, one worth publishing, one containing information of interest to other children, or one that is of great length. When these first grade children 'revise', the revision is usually in the form of adding information at the beginning or end of the selection. Seldom does it occur in the interior of the text. Disturbing the interior of the text is much more sophisticated than dealing with initial and final states.

Even though the strength of the topic is a strong determinant in the child's interest in revision, several other factors are involved. First, the child needs to spell and write comfortably, having enough speed so that extra writing does not become a penalty. Second, the child must have help in dealing with some of the effects of his first experiences with audience. Third, the child gets help in dealing with spatial-aesthetic issues of changing the text.

When children have sufficient speed in the motor, sound-symbol components, and the general ordering of these on the page, the child can attend more to the text. No longer is the child losing sense of syntax because of the demands of spelling and letter formation. Now when the child is asked, 'And then what will happen?', the child is able to answer several sentences ahead, whereas before, the child was unable to think beyond the next word. In short, the child is now operating in a much broader space-time frame on the text and can have greater distance on the information.

With distance the child does not find freedom. New problems of control arise. The child can usually read well enough now to recognise the discrepancy between intentions and what, in fact, has occurred in the text. The child does not necessarily like what he sees. Up to this time egocentricity has provided a protective mask, pushing the child into playful activity when writing. Audiences may have responded negatively to what he has done, but the child does not hear. He believes the audience has major problems. *He* does not.

At the end of their first formal year of schooling, many children shed their egocentric masks. When they do, they are not unlike the butterfly emerging from the chrysalis: weak, floppy, grotesque in movement, yet full of promise. They begin to hear the comments of classmates and teachers. They are aware of a discrepancy between their intentions and what is on the paper. 'It doesn't sound good,' says the child. The child wants to change the selection but often doesn't know how. Children may cease to write, avoid writing, or turn to the stronger suit of reading. For many young writers this is a highly vulnerable time, one that calls for an understanding teacher in conferences, a teacher who has helped the class to become a good audience. More than ever, a teacher's comments need to be specific, carefully listening to the child's voice as the paper is discussed.

A third element that stands in the way of children's control of revision at this time is the spatial-aesthetic issue. Children simply don't know how to fit in the new information. The teacher may say, 'Show me where you want to put what you have just said. The child may not be able to locate where the information should go. If the child can locate it, he may still not know the mechanics of inserting information. Writing up margins, drawing arrows, putting in a caret are not tools that are part of the child's repertoire. Up to this point most of the children have erased words or several sentences when changes were made. But looking through the child's eyes, this question arises, 'How do you put something in when you don't want to change what's already there?' Splicing is new territory. The child needs help.

Revision presents an aesthetic barrier. The reason most children erase is to preserve the appearance of the paper. This occurs even in rooms where teachers stress lining out, or drawing arrows as a revising procedure. Children erase because they want the next to be right the first time.

Have you ever observed children during the moment of their first encounter with a new piece of blank paper? Note how many times they 'clean' it before writing on it. They stroke, brush, even blow away imaginary dust. The cleaning continues during and after writing as well.

The following writing conference demonstrates a child in transition and how the teacher helped him deal with the spatial-aesthetic issues:

*Teacher:* I see that you were able to put in the word 'may' to show that 'Brontosaurus *may* travel in families'. (Chris had been able to sandwich in the small word without erasing.) But you didn't say why they travel in families.

*Chris:* They travel in families to protect the young.

*Teacher:* Do you think that is important information?

*Chris:* Yes, but there isn't any place to put it. (Chris's writing goes from left to right over to the right hand margin at the bottom of the paper. Above this writing is a picture of a brontosaurus.)

*Teacher:* Look the paper over and show me where you could write it in.

*Chris:* There isn't any . . . (voice rising)

*Teacher:* Look the entire paper over and put your hand on any space where there isn't writing or drawing. (There is a space above the drawing.)

*Chris:* Well, I could put it up here (motions to the top of the paper) but it would look stupid. The other part is down here.

*Teacher:* How could you show they were connected?

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*Chris:* I could put an arrow down here pointing to the part that's at the top.

*Teacher:* Good, but you'll need to connect the arrow with the top. This is what writers do when they are getting their books ready for the publisher.

What doesn't show in the dialogue is Chris's concern about drawing the line connecting the information from the bottom to the top. Although he came up with the solution for the placement of information, he was not satisfied with the appearance of the product. He was pleased to know what professional writers would do when they wrote, but still may wish to recopy the text.

*Revision in the Upper Primary Grades.* Lucy McCormick Calkins, research associate on this study, has completed a major work on revision practices of third grade children. She has identified four kinds of revisers from observation of child behaviours during writing, the analysis of their drafts, and data gathered from their attempts to revise a text written by Calkins about a common classroom experience. In the last of these, the children were directed to revise a text filled with informational inaccuracies. They first told the researcher what they felt should be changed. Then they changed the text on the page they had just critiqued.

Calkins has particularly attended to how children change their use of information when revising. She asks such questions as: 'How does the information change between first and last drafts? When children move from one draft to another, how do they use the last draft when they compose the new one? What are the changing strategies that children use as they advance in the writing process?' Her report of this phase of our study will appear in the fall issue of *Research in the Teaching of English* (NCTE).

Calkins found that children's strategies followed time-space development in a very consistent way. The degree to which they were able to control revision was dependent on their ability to use the draft from one page to the next, their ability to infuse information into the text, then to manipulate information from one page to another. These abilities show in the practices of the four types of revisers:

*TYPE I* These children write successive drafts without looking back to earlier drafts. Because they do not reread and reconsider what they have written, there is no comparison or weighing of options. Changes between drafts seem arbitrary. Rewriting appears to be a random, undirected process of continually moving on. In their own writing they have many unfinished writing selections. They learn little from draft to draft. On the common classroom exercise, they might come up with new information but could only add it on to the end of selections.

*TYPE II* These children keep refining earlier work but the refinement is of minor consequence. The content and structure of their writing does not change. Some spelling, punctuation, or a word or two might be changed, but that is all. On the common classroom exercise, these children, unlike *Type I* children, would look back at the text and come up with new information, but could not insert the data in the text.

*TYPE III* These children move between periods when they refine drafts and periods when they are continually abandoning them and beginning new ones. At times they appear to be like *Type I* children, but they are closer to being *Type II* children. Moreover, their periods of restless discontent with their drafts indicate that they are in transition to the next level, *Type IV*. On the common classroom exercise, they are able to insert the information convincingly into the text. Their restlessness seems to come from the higher standards they have set themselves.

*TYPE IV* For these children, revision results from interaction between writer and draft, between writer and internalised audience, between writer and evolving subject. They reread to see what they have said and to discover what they want to say. There is a constant vying between intended meaning and discovered meaning, between the forward motion of making and the backward motion of assessing. On the common classroom exercise, these children immediately asked if they could change parts of it. One change led to another. Arrows, lines, stars and carets were used to change and insert the information.

Most writers seem to go through these four stages of development in revision. More data will be added, findings of the first year checked from another entire year of information on revision. Without extensive review of the data, many children have advanced in stages of revision. Many of the type IV children from the third grade have changed drafting habits—that is, they no longer do as many drafts, and more information appears in final draft form from the first draft. They also do more rehearsing of writing when they are not in class. They think about revision strategies when they are with friends or reading or watching television.

Lest all of these revision data sound too cut and dried, it is important to mention one child, Amy, who does not fit this pattern of development. Amy was a good writer from the start of the study but did not revise. She was the kind of child who would sit down to write and produce the following lead about cheetahs: 'A cheetah would make a sports car look like a turtle'. Her first drafts were better than most of the *Type IV* children who did extensive revisions. For a year and a half Amy baffled us both with the quality of her writing and her lack of revisions. Amy could tell by our questions that we didn't understand how she went about composing. I think she enjoyed our perplexity.

In April of this year she informed Lucy Calkins:

> I think I know how I write. The other night I was lying in bed and I couldn't get to sleep. I was thinking 'I wonder how I will start my fox piece in the morning'. It was 9:30 at night and Sidney my cat was next to me on the bed. I thought and thought and couldn't figure how to start it. Finally, about 10:30, my sister came home and she turned on the hall light. Now my door has a round hole where there ought to be a lock. A beam of light came through the hole and struck Sidney in the face. Sidney went 'squint'. Then I knew how I would start my fox piece:

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> 'There was a fox who lived in a den and over the den was a stump and in the stump was a crack and a beam of light came through the crack and struck the fox full in the face.'

Amy is an excellent artist with an eye for detail and the language to go with what she sees. She does many off-stage rehearsals of what she will write. From this incident we merely get a glimpse of what she must do as she goes her own way in composing. Fortunately she has a teacher who does not assign revisions just for the sake of revision.

### *Final Reflection*

These data on children's transition from speech to print and on the process of revision provide a base for observing children as they change in the writing process. These data are not cast in concrete. They must be viewed within the limitation of the setting in which they were gathered. I think the data show us *what ingredients* are significant in observing children's growth as writers.

I am frequently asked, 'What can I do to speed up children's growth as writers? What can I do as a teacher to move the child from a *Type I* to a *Type IV* writer?' It is natural to want children to progress. But our anxieties about child growth lead us to take control of the writing away from the children. We want to produce materials or come up with methods that unfortunately convince children that the source of control of their writing lies outside of themselves. When children feel in control of their writing their dedication is such that they violate the child labour laws. We could never assign what they choose to do.

The teachers at our site have taught me a great deal in these two years of inservice training for researchers. They have slowed the process of teaching down in such a way that children have begun to catch up to what they already know. They listen for children's intentions to emerge, observe where they are in their development, and then find ways to provide the appointment for the child to control what he is doing.

Children will continually surprise us if we let them. As in Amy's case, when everyone seems to fit a pattern, if we look carefully, many do not. This may seem to lessen the importance of growth patterns across children. I think it heightens their importance. They are a solid base from which we can see the important differences in each child. And every child has them. As the study has gone on, we have become more fascinated with the differences in children than in their similarities. This is what happens when we slow down, listen, and let the children lead. That is the joy of both research and teaching.

# YOUNG WRITERS' PREFERENCE FOR NON-NARRATIVE MODES OF COMPOSITION

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# Young Writers' Preference for Non-narrative Modes of Writing

Teachers and textbook publishers often expect a first grade child's early writing will take the form of a story or narrative. They offer blanks to fill, story starters, and lists of correctly spelled words. Moffett and Britton, whose rhetorical systems have developmental components, support the consensus that narrative precedes other modes of writing. In classrooms where adults exercise a benevolent control over what children write, these expectations may be justified. In a classroom where first grade children were given control over their writing, they did not write narratives at first.

The data came from a two-year case study of sixteen children in grades one through four. The study, designed by Professor Donald H. Graves of the University of New Hampshire and funded by the National Institute of Education, is now in its second year. Donald Graves, Lucy Calkins, and I observe the children as they write in their classrooms at Atkinson Academy, the public school for Atkinson, New Hampshire. We collect children's writing products, interview them about their work, and record their writing behaviors and conferences on videotape and by hand. I gathered the data reported here in Mary Ellen Giacobbe's first grade class.

## Procedure

Mrs. Giacobbe returned control of their writing to the children when she removed her lists of correctly spelled words, which determined the topic and content of the writing, and allowed the children to use invented spelling. Like mature writers, they no longer worried about correct spelling on the first draft. She showed her class the books another first grade class had written, and she stocked the writing table with different kinds of paper -- large and small, lined and unlined, and empty books with construction paper covers. Every day a few more children experimented with unassigned writing. Soon she required the children to do some writing every day, often at a time and with a group of their choice.

Mrs. Giacobbe provided an audience through a sharing time for new books every day and publication. Each child chose one book in five for publication. She edited the invented spelling and typed the text in a hard cover book. The twenty-two students wrote over one thousand books and published two hundred seventeen books. In individual conferences, Mrs. Giacobbe responded to the content of one book and instructed the child in a writing skill she selected, usually one skill at each conference. In group conferences, children evaluated their own writing. Mrs. Giacobbe guided them with questions: "What is your book about?" "What did you think of your book?" "Why do you want to publish this book and not the others?" "What is the best part of your book?" "Why?" The children modeled the questions they asked their classmates on her probes for information an egocentric author assumed the audience would know. "You said you played a game. Well, what game did you play?" "The part about the fourteen knots on the rope should go where you talk about climbing the rope, not at the end of the book." The authors usually acted on their classmates' suggestions for revision immediately.

The data collection procedures repeat Graves' earlier (1975) procedures. The twenty-two children were heterogeneous in terms of academic ability. Of the four case study children, Chris and Sandy represent superior academic ability; Sarah, average; and Toni, below average. The two hundred seventeen published books for the whole class of twenty-two children form a base of product data. The four case study children provided data about the books each one chose and rejected for publication. One case study child, Sarah, was the source of the writing process data.

## Findings

### The Whole Class

Of the thirty-six books published in November, twenty-three were non-narratives and thirteen were narratives. The percentage of published narratives increased over the months: November, 36%; December, 60%; January, 50%; February, 64%; March, 78%; April, 100%; May (and a few in June), 78%.

I judged any piece of writing that was ordered chronologically to [illegible] narrative. If non-narrative elements were mixed in it, then the piece had to be half or more narrative to fall within that category. Non-narrative pieces, the favorites early in the year, were typically titled "All About..." and were a collection of attributes of the topic. Steve's book, "Whales," published in November, is an example of an early non-narrative book:

> Whales are black and some are gray.
> Whales are big. They can eat you in one bite.
> There are brown whales and there are black whales too.
> There are white whales.
> There are blue killer whales.

"Whales," like many non-narratives, is an inventory of knowledge the author might like to be famous for among his or her classmates. Other non-narratives are heavily affective and clearly self-expressive in function. "Like" and "love" are the favorite verbs in this type of book. In January Jenny wrote and published "Guz," an example of a girl's highly affective non-narrative:

> Guz was a little caterpillar.
> I like Guz very much.
> Jessica likes Guz very much, too.
> Audrey and I like to play with Guz.
> Sharon likes Guz very much.

Boys wrote and published affective non-narrative books, too, but not as many as girls. Joshua's book, "My Father's Skimobile," published in February, is an example:

> My dad's skimobile is fun when it goes fast.
> Sometimes I get to ride my dad's skimobile.
> When I get to ride my father's skimobile, it is fun
>     when it goes fast.
> It is fun when I get to ride my dad's skimobile.
> Sometimes we go to our Nana's and Grampy's to go
>     skimobiling.
> It is fun when we go skimobiling.

Two of Anna's books, published in November, show how a young writer might treat the same topic. The first was non-narrative:

> "My Dog"
> I can't play with my dog until Christmas.
> My dog jumped out of the truck and broke his leg.
> I love my dog so, so much.
> I do love my dog so, so, so, so much.
> I had a friend come over. We watched the dog.
> I do love my dog. I hugged the dog.

Anna's second book, "My Bubble and My Dog," was a narrative:

> I was blowing a bubble.
> My dog jumped. She bit the bubble.
> My dog hit the bubble. It got on her nose.
> It got all over the house.
> My mom was mad!

Both narrative and non-narrative writing developed from the beginning to the end of the year, and the first graders integrated information about events and their feelings later in the year, reducing the need for simple books of praise.

Katy's growth as a writer who can narrate events and express emotions is evident in the difference between these two pieces, the first published in December and the second in March:

> "My Friend and I"
> My friend and I are playing.
> My friend and I went sliding on my sled.
> I fell off the sled and got a bloody nose.
> My mom gave me a band-aid.
>
> "My Uncle's Sheep"
> Seven dogs attacked my uncle's sheep.
> My Uncle Terry went out back. He saw the sheep.
> One of the sheep had no leg. The dogs tore the leg off.
> So my Uncle Terry called my Uncle Craig to tell him what happened.
> My uncle's mom called my mom. My mom said, "I'm going to come to your house."
> When I got home from school I said, "I'm home now." Then my mom said, "I have something sad to tell you."
> She told us what happened. When she told us we were crying.
> At supper we told my father what happened.
> We went to my uncle's house. We said, "We are so sorry."
> A couple days later my uncle's sheep had a baby lamb. My uncle was happy.
> My grandmother called my mom and she told my mom what happened.
> My mom told us after she got off the phone. We were happy.
> The baby sheep died. I felt sad.

Gary's books provide an example of a young author's growth as a writer of non-narrative books. His first, published in November, is called "All About Alligators":

Alligators eat people.
Alligators live in the water and on land.
Alligators sleep with their mouths open.
Alligators can open their mouths wide.
Alligators can swim.
They run quite fast on short, squat legs.

"All About Alligators" had thirty-seven words. In May, Gary wrote "Sailboats," a 339-word nonnarrative book:

> Sailboats don't go fast. But if the wind blows hard, they go faster. The more sails there are, the faster it goes.
> Some sailboats are small. And some are bigger than other ones. Some sailboats can hold a lot of people and some can't.
> Some sailboats tip over easily. If the wind hits the sail a different way, it might tip over.
> If a lot of people get on a small boat, it might tip over.
> Catamaran is a kind of a sailboat. It had four sails. It can't hold too many people.
> Catamarans can go fast because there are a lot of sails on them. It is a racing boat. Some other sailboats can go fast, too.
> Catamarans have a lot of sails because they are made that way. It is hard to make the sail go the way of the wind.
> The Constitution was a fighting ship. It had a lot of cannons. My father has a copy of the blueprints of the Constitution.
> The Constitution can hold a lot of people. Sometimes the Constitution was called Old Ironsides because when the cannon balls hit it, they bounced right off.
> They bounced off because it was made out of wet wood. If it was made out of hard wood, it would blow up. Wet wood is hard to break, and hard wood is easy to break.
> One-of-a-Kind has a lot of sails. And it was the only kind that was made that way.
> I went on the Mount Washington boat. I saw a model of the old Mount Washington boat.
> The Thermopylae was a racing ship. It raced the Flying Cloud a lot.
> Christopher Columbus went out on the Santa Maria. He thought that the world was round, and some other people thought it was flat.
> But he was right. It was round. The men on the Santa Maria and the men on the Nina and the Pinta were afraid that the world was flat and that they would fall right off the side of the world.

Boys and girls published about the same proportion of narrative and non-narrative books: 61% of the boys' books and 65% of the girls' books were narratives. The girls wrote more than the boys, averaging 1.65 books published each month to the boys' 1.25. Table 1 shows no major differences between girls' and boys' proportions of narratives and non-narratives except in February.

TABLE 1

KINDS OF BOOKS BOYS AND GIRLS PUBLISHED

| | Nov. | Dec. | Jan. | Feb. | March | April | May | total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Boys | | | | |
| non-narrative | 60%<br>9 | 43%<br>3 | 54%<br>7 | 50%<br>5 | 22%<br>4 | -<br>0 | 21%<br>3 | 39%<br>31 |
| narrative | 40%<br>6 | 57%<br>4 | 46%<br>6 | 50%<br>5 | 78%<br>14 | 100%<br>3 | 79%<br>11 | 61%<br>49 |
| | | | | Girls | | | | |
| non-narrative | 67%<br>14 | 37.5%<br>6 | 48%<br>11 | 31%<br>9 | 21%<br>4 | -<br>0 | 22%<br>4 | 35%<br>48 |
| narrative | 33%<br>7 | 62.5%<br>10 | 52%<br>12 | 69%<br>20 | 79%<br>15 | 100%<br>11 | 78%<br>14 | 65%<br>89 |
| | | | | Whole Class | | | | |
| non-narrative | 64%<br>23 | 40%<br>9 | 50%<br>18 | 36%<br>14 | 22%<br>8 | -<br>0 | 22%<br>7 | 36%<br>79 |
| narrative | 36%<br>13 | 60%<br>14 | 50%<br>13 | 64%<br>25 | 78%<br>29 | 100%<br>14 | 78%<br>25 | 64%<br>138 |

## Four Case Study Children

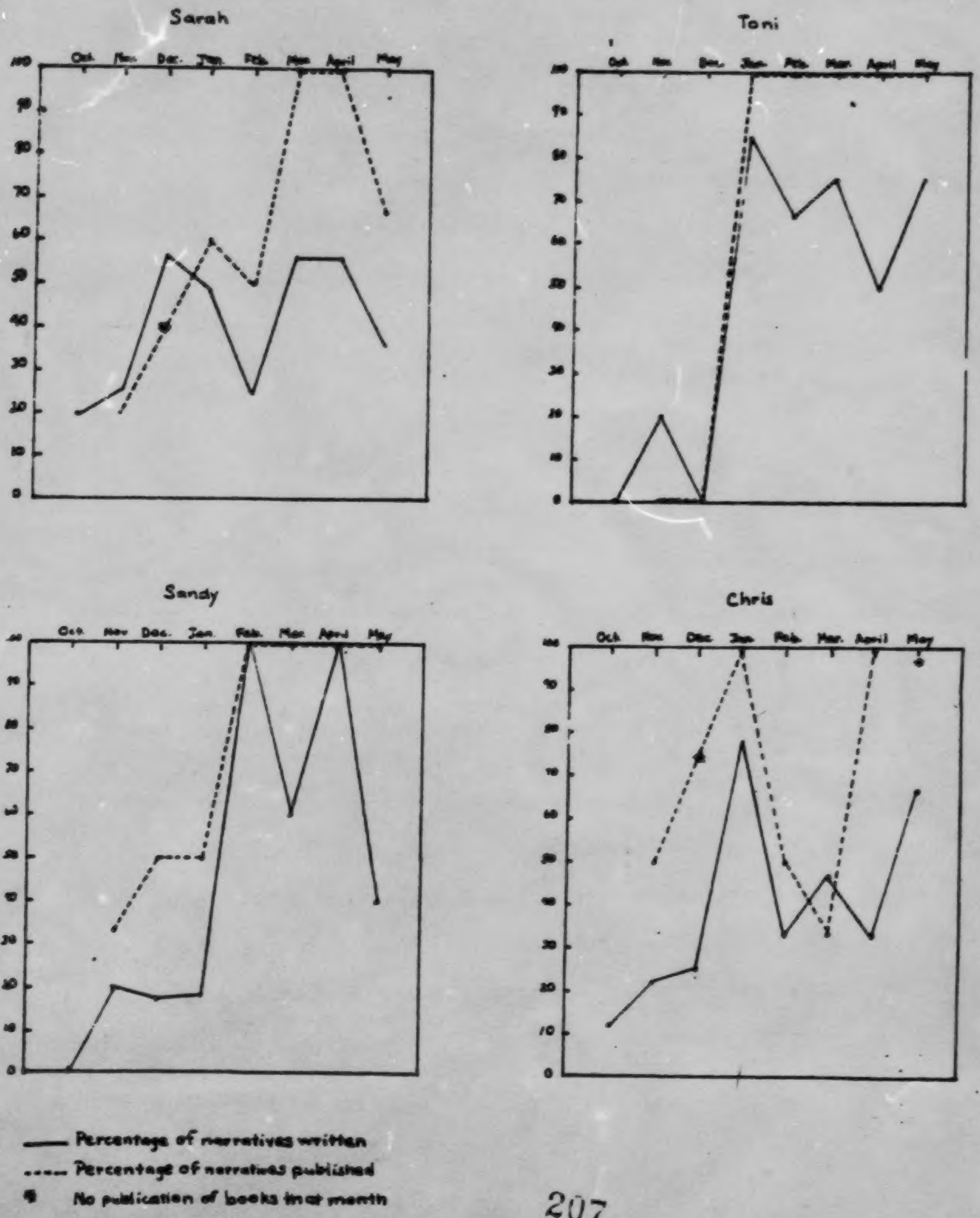
The four case study children in Mrs. Giacobbe's first grade class preferred to publish narratives. The graphs in Figure 1 show that in seven months of publication, the four children published a higher or equal percentage of narratives than they wrote. The three exceptions, Toni and Sarah in November and Chris in February, wrote a higher percentage of narratives than they chose to publish in only one month. Sandy always selected a higher or equal percentage of narratives for publication.

## Sarah

Sarah, like her classmates, made a switch in her mode of writing from a strong preference for non-narrative modes in October and November to an increasing interest in narrative in December and January. Figure 1 shows that in the second half of first grade, she still enjoyed writing in non-narrative modes, but she more often chose her narratives to be published. In October and November, seven of her twenty-nine pieces, or 24%, were narratives. In December and January, half of Sarah's twenty-eight pieces were narratives. December first is a pivotal date in Sarah's writing development because an important part of her rehearsal, or prewriting behavior, changed. Sharah began to draw figures in profile. People and owls could run, ride bikes, and chase each other. Within books written after profiles appeared, figures in action and in profile often illustrated a narrative. Figures facing forward, static and motionless, often illustrated a non-narrative.

# FIGURE I

Percentage of Narratives Written and Published Among Case Study Children



On January 23, Sarah wrote "Me and Chipper," a non-narrative, in twelve minutes--eight minutes to draw the pictures and four minutes to write the words. All fourteen figures in her drawings for "Me and Chipper" face forward. Here is Sarah's book, "Me and Chipper:"

Me and Chipper have lots of fun.
We have fun.
I love Chipper so much.
I won't stop loving Chipper.
It's so much fun.
It is fun.

In "The Pretty Little Girl," a narrative written on January 11, Sarah rehearsed by drawing eleven figures in profile. Only one faces forward.

The pretty little girl. Her name is Kristin.
She loves flowers the best. She hates school the worst.
She jumped up. She was scared. She saw the villain.
She punched him.
She's so glad. She's asleep.

When narrative was new to Sarah in the first half of first grade, her activity level was an index of the kind of book she was writing. While she wrote "Me and Chipper," she sat at the writing table talking to her friends, drawing, and writing. When Sarah wrote a narrative with a sequence of events, she was in action. I observed Sarah writing five complete narratives in the first half of first grade. In four, she interrupted her writing three or more times by getting up for unnecessary errands--sharpening already sharp pencils, eating a snack, getting books to read, hunting for unnecessary scraps of paper. In the seven complete non-narrative writing episodes I observed, Sarah sat still or got up once or twice.

Further evidence of Sarah's need for movement while she wrote narratives came in January when she wrote on videotape for the second time. She planned an adventure story: they stopped for gasoline, a kidnapper pulled her brother out of the car, and Sarah rescued him from the villain. Then Sarah wanted to get up. I began to unclip the microphone and disentagle her from the wires, but she decided against getting up. After drawing her first picture, Sarah decided against writing an adventure. Instead, she told who in her family liked to go to the beach and who liked to sleep.

When adults avoid writing by pacing, drinking coffee, and cleaning the typewriter, we say they are trying to achieve distance. In the face of difficulties composing a narrative imposed, Sarah needed to move about the room. In the second half of first grade, the responsibility of choosing a topic made Sarah as restless as writing a narrative did in the first.

Sarah's syntax suffered when she wrote narratives in November and December. An early November narrative called forth mature writing behavior--rehearsing aloud beforehand and composing aloud--but Sarah wrote her story in telegraphic form.

> "Woody Owl"
> Woody is cute.
> He took a worm.
> Woody dead.
> Woody wake.
> Woody good.
> Woody nice.

Donald H. Graves (1979) has said, "When children try a new approach to writing, other areas in which they have been competent may suffer temporarily." Sarah's syntax suffered when she attempted narratives in November and December, just as her spelling of easy, automatic words suffered in March and April when she first revised drafts.*

## Discussion

When first grade writers experimented with the new medium of print, they repeated the early film makers' experiments with film. At first, they exploited the special qualities of the new medium. Shots of acrobats, parades, and onrushing trains gave audiences the novelty of motion captured on film. For first grade children, print added a dimension of permanence to their representations that they had not found in blockbuilding or dramatic play. By the end of the nineteenth century, audiences began to tire of the movies. "What finally saved the movies was the introduction of narrative," said Knight about the innovations that began in the first few years of the twentieth century. First grade writers paralleled the film makers when they turned to narrative and, with the approval of their audiences, developed story-telling techniques equivalent to cutting, editing, and moving the camera in film making.

The source of the children's changing preferences for non-narrative and narrative writing was not their teacher. Mrs. Giacobbe responded to the content of each piece, pointing out where more information was necessary for the reader to understand what the author meant. She had no bias in favor of either mode of writing. The children, from middle class homes, knew stories from books and television. Many were familiar with concept books as well. A concept book, in Huck's classification of children's literature, is "one that describes the various dimensions of an abstract idea through the use of comparisons...a young child's information book." The children may have imitated concept books in their early non-narratives, although they fell short of exploring the dimensions of an abstract idea. Whatever the source of their forms, the first grade children grew increasingly aware of their peers' responses. They talked about each other's drafts in group conferences, in whole-class sharing of books, and in informal discussions at the writing table and library. The children wrote to please themselves and their peers according to criteria that probably remained unarticulated.

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* A more thorough discussion of Sarah can be found in Sowers' "A Six-Year-Old's Writing Process: The First Half of First Grade."

Britton's rhetorical system, like Moffett's, has a developmental component. He predicts first grade children's writing more accurately in terms of function than in terms of form. In his classification of the functions of writing, Britton expects children's early writing will be expressive at first and later become transactional or poetic. Highly affective non-narratives, such as Jenny's "Guz," Anna's "My Dog," and Joshua's "My Father's Skimobile," express the authors' feelings. Information books, such as Steve's and Gary's, are intended not so much to communicate information as to display it and manipulate it for the author's pleasure. Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, and Rosen said, "Probably the first written forms internalized are those of narrative, since anecdotes and stories, spoken or written, are part of a child's experience from the very beginning." But the first grade writers either imitated the form of a concept book or ignored form altogether and took inventory of their knowledge.

Moffett's rhetorical system does not predict an early capacity for non-narrative writing. Moffett ranks three kinds of thinking and writing and he expects narrative to appear before other modes of writing. Chronologic occupies the bottom rung on the ladder of abstraction, followed by analogic at the intermediate level. Chronologic demands the least abstraction from the temporal and spatial order of events, and analogic demands more inclusion and exclusion for the writer to assimilate narratives into generalizations. At the highest level, tautologic, the writer transforms the general assertions of analogic thinking into other verbal forms. The transformation does not change the meaning, but the restatement yields richer implications.

Non-narratives, such as Steve's "Whales" and Gary's "All About Alligators" and "Sailboats," resemble the analogic level in their subject matter and expository treatment more closely than they resemble the chronologic. Analogic thinking and writing may be rooted in elaborated lists instead of assimilated narratives. Clay observed five-year-olds writing and noticed, "...they took stock of their own learning systematically. Their work sometimes shows how spontaneously they arrange or order the things they have learned into inventories." Clay is referring to the letters, numbers, and words the children listed, but the inventory principle she observed in young writers extends to facts about a favorite subject children list. An inventory of facts may be the learner's starting point for controling and exploring a body of information. Flower found that adults' early drafts take the form of narrative and unplanned juxtaposition. Writer-based prose, her term for the writer's failure to transform thought for the reader, is useful because it retrieves information in much the same way as a list.

## Implications

### Rhetoric

The failure of Moffett's rhetorical system to predict children's early writing preferences has three implications. First, chronologic might not precede analogic in a hierarchy of abstraction. Moffett may have underestimated the difficulty of writing narrative. Joan Didion, the novelist and essayist, has observed there is no narrative line to events. Chronologic may deserve a ladder of abstraction all its own. A second implication is that analogic thinking may be rooted in pre-narrative, elaborated lists. Third, a mature writer may scale this modified ladder of abstraction with each new piece of writing. The writing process may be reformulated as listing, making inferences, and revising by means of tautologic thinking.

### Research

Young writers' changing preferences in their mode of writing remain to be confirmed in another first grade classroom with similar or dissimilar methods of writing instruction. Writing process research must take into account the effects of mode and changes in mode of writing on the writer's behavior during composing. The effects of rehearsal and revision on flexibility or rigidity in the mode of writing are still unknown.

Instruction

1. First grade children are capable of writing early in the year without the assistance of topic assignments, spelling lists, or extensive supervision. Children may devise more suitable writing tasks for themselves than a teacher can assign.

2. A teacher who assigns a "story" to a first grade writer may be assigning a more difficult form than the child can write well.

3. When a child creates a new writing problem to solve by experimenting in a new mode, he or she may temporarily become restless, avoid writing, and make unexpected errors before the problem is finally solved.

4. The best preparation for writing narratives may not be filling in blanks in commercial or teacher-made materials, but independent writing through invented spelling in a mode the child selects.

5. The best preparation for expository writing may not be writing narratives, but informal listing.

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RESEARCH UPDATE

# THE SPELLING PROCESS: A LOOK AT STRATEGIES

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Brian's fourth grade teacher, Carolyn Currier, says: I think both Brian and I realized he had a spelling weakness. . ." That weakness sometimes meant one misspelled word for every five words written. In October of third grade Brian misspelled twenty-three percent of the words in a first draft. By the spring of fourth grade, he misspelled only five percent. Clearly, his spelling had improved.

This is the story of how that improvement occurred. I chose Brian from among sixteen case-study children for two reasons: (1) his spelling improved dramatically over the two years of the study and (2) his spelling strategies--the vehicles for that improvement--are revealed through his process of frequent and thorough revision.

Brian considers himself a good writer though an average speller. In fact, he is a good writer, one of the best in the class in use of specifics and organization toward meaning. In grade five he said, looking back: "I think I was an average speller in third and fourth grade; I think I'm still an average speller." But he does not equate average spelling with average writing, nor do his teachers. His positive attitude toward writing, and his pride in his work--a reflection of his teachers' attitudes--allow him to learn to spell through his writing.

Student writers, like Brian, may misspell words in early drafts (just as they may omit information, or include a misleading lead), but those same writers can produce polished final drafts. To look at spelling as a process, as part of the writing process, is to recognize the competent speller as someone who gets the letters right in the end.

This article will describe Brian's spelling strategies as he moves from draft to draft. Eight pieces of his work are selected for analysis, four each from his third and fourth grade files. Each piece includes between two and seven drafts. Brian wrote nearly forty final papers in third and fourth grade; I chose papers for analysis by date and number of drafts, looking for papers with many drafts written at different times in the year. I located first occurrences of spelling errors and followed those words through to the final draft. Defining spelling errors as mistakes in choice or arrangement of letters, I ignored: contraction errors ("cant" instead of "can't"), parts of speech errors ("I had fell" instead of "I had fallen"), spacing errors ("see saw" instead of "seesaw"), and capitalization errors ("denmark" instead of "Denmark").

## What Brian Does to Achieve Spelling Success

In the fall of third grade when Brian misspelled twenty-three percent of the words in first drafts, he misspelled sixteen percent in final drafts. In the spring of fourth grade he misspelled five percent in first drafts and less than one percent in final drafts. He'd progressed in two ways: (1) he misspelled fewer words in the first place and (2) he was able to correct more of the words he did misspell. He produced his final drafts "independently" according to his teacher--working as his editor, circling the words he thought were wrong, using the dictionary to correct them, asking for help when he thought he needed it.

Glenda Bissex' book, GNYS AT WRK: A Child Learns to Read and Write, helped me understand Brian's spelling process. The book describes the growth of another young writer, Paul, from inventive to conventional speller, age five to age nine. Brian's spelling process through several drafts parallels Paul's spelling growth over several years. That is, Brian's correction strategies resemble the stages Paul passed through in learning to spell.

Briefly, Paul's growth in GNYS AT WRK from inventive to conventional speller goes like this:

1. He represents sounds and words with letter names--"I" means "I" (as in me), "B" means "bee" (as in bumble);
2. He learns that letters stand for sounds which usually are not the same as letter names. He spells phonetically--"haos" instead of "house," "tomoro" instead of "tomorrow."
3. He learns that a word isn't spelled right until it looks right. He uses this sight word strategy to check for correctness, discovering silent letters, visually correct letter combinations.
4. He learns that meaning can help spelling. He uses affixes correctly--"exciting" instead of the earlier "eksiting." He distinguishes homonyms--"knead" for "need."

Brian's correction process begins to parallel Paul's learning process at Step 2 as these excerpts from Brian's work will illustrate:

> Draft 1--January 7, 1979
>
> B-hop r-o-m, went plain! We speeded up and slowed down then speed up agan. A copele of minites later toke off. You con't see Denmark! It was a bit of truble geting my ears unpluged!
>
> Draft 4--January 11, 1979
>
> R-o-m-r-o-m, went the plane! It speeded up then slowed down then speeded up again and toke off! A couple of minutes later you counldn't see denmark! It was a bit of trouble getting my ears unpluged...

These are two leads to the same story, three drafts and four days apart. In Draft 1, Brian misspells nine words. In Draft 4 he has corrected six of those nine. Here's how Brian spells those nine problem words in drafts one and four.

Table I
Spellings of Problem Words Across Drafts

| Draft 1 | Draft 4 |
|---|---|
| plain | plane |
| agan | again |
| copele (copcle) | couple |
| minites | minutes |
| toke | toke |
| con't | counldn't |
| truble | trouble |
| geting | getting |
| unpluged | unpluged |

Here are some ways in which Brian's correction strategies parallel Paul's learning:

Paul's Step 2 -- Phonetic Spelling

In Draft 1 Brian spells the following words the way he hears them: "agan," "copele," "minites," "toke," "truble," "geting," "unpluged," "con't." He records the sounds on the page as Paul did at his Steps 1 and 2. Bissex says of Paul: "He was not after correctness but rather phonetic transcription--finding some way of representing for himself the significant sounds he distinguished in words." (p. 11)

Paul's Step 3 -- Sight Word Test

By draft four, Brian's spellings look more conventional. In "couple" and "trouble," he finds the "ou" combination. In "minutes," he substitutes "u" for the phonetic "i." He doubles the "t" in "getting." He adds the "i" in "again." And in "couldn't," he adds the silent "l."

Paul's Step 4 -- Meaning Helps Spelling

Brian applies meaning to help with spelling. He substitutes the homonym "plane" correctly for "plain." He appears to figure out that "couldn't," which he never spells quite right, combines "could" and "not," placing the apostrophe correctly between "n" and "t." These two excerpts are particularly rich in variety of spelling errors and correction strategies. More parallels to Paul's Steps 2, 3, and 4, drawn from Brian's other writing, follow. Parentheses indicate correct spellings which Brian did not use. Arrows show Brian's spelling changes.

### Step 2 -- Phonetic Spelling

exspd exsepet (except)
elafents (elephants)
breth (breathe)
anser (answer)
delad (delayed)

### Step 3 -- Sight Word Test

wial → while -- addition of silent "h" and "e"
captin → captain -- visual "ai" combination
lugege → luggage -- addition of silent "g," substitution of "a" for phonetic "e"
bakc → back -- switch to conventional "ck" order

### Step 4 -- Meaning Helps Spelling

specar → speeker (speaker) -- use of affix "er"
arport → airport -- use of "air" in compound
caped → cepted → kepted (kept) -- attempt to show past tense with "ed"
hear → here -- use of homonym
roder → rober (robber) -- knowledge of root word "rob"

The arrows show how Brian moves from phonetic spellings to closer approximations of conventional spelling. Paul, in learning to write, moved along the same path. As a five year old he communicated with letter names and phonics; as a nine year old he spelled most of his words conventionally. Paul, in the early stages of invented spelling, doesn't compare his renditions of words to standard spellings--he can't read. He doesn't know about the one-spelling-for-one-word rule. According to Carol Chomsky: "He (the inventive speller) has no preconceptions of how the word ought to be spelled, nor any expectations that there is a 'right' or a 'wrong' way to do it."

Brian's preconceptions about spelling complicate matters for him. He knows about 'right' and 'wrong' spelling, but must suspend his concern for rightness in order to get on with the writing.

When Paul, in Steps 3 and 4, becomes concerned with conventional spelling, he writes less. He asks more "how do you spell this" questions. He loses some of the fluency of his invented spelling days (Bissex, p. 31). I suspect that fluency is the reason for the phonetic strategy of Brian's first drafts--he has to get the ideas down quickly before he forgets them. Like Paul, Brian spells to communicate. The communication in early drafts takes precedence over spelling. He suspends his eye for errors long enough to get the message down. With the suspension of eye, ear takes over; he spells phonetically.

When asked what a first draft is for, Brian says: "The first draft is just writing down the idea of the story. Then you add detail and more detail. The final draft is when you have all the detail you can get into the story." Once Brian has recorded "all the detail you can get," then he can polish the spelling, then he can slow down enough to employ sight word and meaning strategies to weed out errors. Brian says: "On first drafts I just print the word out. Later I use the dictionary, usually only on the next to final draft."

Brian's spelling pattern parallels Paul's growth in one other way: spelling experimentation. Experts (Chomsky, Read, Bissex) agree that the "misspellings" of the inventive speller do not lead to memorization of mistakes--the child reinvents each word, treats each word as a new problem, knows there is more than one way to spell a word because there's usually more than one way to represent a sound--for example, "k" or "c" serve equally well for the initial sound in "cat."

Brian's awareness of the one-spelling-for-one-word rule does not prevent him from experimenting. Table I shows that he experimented with the spelling of couple (copele, copcle) in Draft 1. A survey of his writing reveals that he experiments only in early drafts; by the final draft, one-spelling-for-one-word prevails. Part of his spelling process includes establishing consistency: a word appearing five times in the final draft will be spelled the same way each time--even if all the spellings are wrong. In early drafts, when Brian uses the phonetic spelling strategy of inventive spellers, he also imitates their "reinvention" techniques as Table II shows.

Table II
Brian's Spelling Experimentation

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10/78 | (circus) | ciekiers<br>cierkiers | 10/79 | (mirror) | marre<br>marry<br>merry |
| | (horses) | hreuses<br>hrouses | | | |
| 11/78 | (couldn't) | coint<br>couldn't<br>counld | 1/80 | (cousin) | cusin<br>cussin |
| 2/79 | (people) | pepple<br>peopple | 3/80 | (appreciation) | apreseation<br>apriseation<br>apretiation<br>apretieation<br>apreteation |

## What Brian's Teacher Does to Help Him Spell Successfully

In this column in 1977, Donald Graves, citing Leo Cohen's study of spelling text effectiveness, had this to say about the teaching of spelling: "Spelling is for writing. It is not to develop skills in alphabetizing, recognizing double consonants, or identifying affixes and inflectional endings. These activities may contribute to a greater word sense or a wider vocabulary, but the odds are they do not contribute to greater power in spelling."

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I asked Brian's teacher about spelling instruction in fourth grade apart from his work in writing. She said: "Yes, we use fourth grade spelling word lists. They were expected to learn twenty words weekly. The lists did follow a spelling pattern such as vowel sounds, plurals, endings and prefixes. Brian usually did well with the weekly tests but didn't always apply them to personal writing."

Citing the work of Horn (1947) Graves asserted learning to spell lists of words and learning to spell may be two different processes. Brian learns the spelling words his teacher assigns but doesn't use them in his writing. His drafts reveal a separate, successful agenda for learning to spell words he needs to communicate. That agenda parallels Paul's growth from inventive to conventional speller--and Paul didn't learn to spell by memorizing lists and rules or doing affix exercises; he, too, learned to spell by writing.

Brian's third and fourth grade teachers run classes with room for individual writing (and spelling) processes. They encourage children to choose their own subjects and revise their work; they arrange group and individual conferences, value the communications produced. His teacher, Currier, says: "I don't stress correct spelling on first drafts--I feel it interferes with the flow of ideas. I do stress correct spelling on final drafts..."

Brian's teacher sets high standards for final drafts, but leaves room for individual writing processes, learning strategies. She believes in using first drafts for ideas, final drafts for conventions. Her attitude allows Brian to work out his own solutions to spelling problems.

And Brian knows what he's doing; he says, "The first time I spell the way I hear them...When I write them I don't think about what they look like, but I don't do this (correcting) while I'm writing but after I see what they look like."

Brian edits his work carefully. He circles words which don't look quite right. He says: "Well, I read it through and it doesn't look right so I try it again and it doesn't look right, so I try it again..." He knows how to use the dictionary: "And if I can't find it in one dictionary," he says, "I look in another one."

I asked Brian's teacher what she saw as his strategy for spelling. She said, "Pride in his final draft," adding, "Ability to use a dictionary, a teacher who understands spelling difficulties but realizes the importance of correct spelling." Brian's teacher encouraged him to work out his own spelling problems in his own way as he moved through the writing process.

Copies of Brian's papers show an increased personal investment in the information in successive drafts. It is hardly surprising that by the fourth or fifth unassigned draft he will have a high stake in wanting the spelling to be pleasing to his audience. When asked if spelling matters, if you have to be a good speller to be a good writer, Brian said, "I don't think spelling matters until the final draft." Implying a concern for his audience (even though the misspelled words may be decipherable) he says, "It is nice to have the right spelling, even if they know what you mean."

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How does spelling change for children who revise? Rebecca Rule, guest columnist this month, shows how Brian, a child in the National Institute of Education study on children's writing, changes spelling over a two year period. Rebecca is a published writer of fiction and non-fiction, and research associate in the Writing Process Lab at the University of New Hampshire.

DHG

# The Growth and Development of First Grade Writers

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Steve is in first grade. At 9:10 a.m. he starts his unassigned paper on "Sliding" and doesn't finish until 10:20 a.m. Steve is an average first grade writer with average first grade abilities.

In the midst of page three of his ten page writing booklet, he turns to a friend and says, "Know when I hit a tree? I go sliding off. I go right off the sled and I hit myself on the tree." On the first two pages, Steve has written general comments about sliding on snow. Now on the third page he finds through drawing and writing what he wanted to write about. He points to the drawing and comments to his teacher, "Right here I hit the tree and I slid down the rest of the way."

His teacher responds, "Do you want to tell your readers about that? What happened when you hit the tree?" For the next fifteen minutes Steve calmly adds information and rewrites the page where he hits the tree. He even excludes two other pages in his booklet he now feels are unnecessary.

Most manuals and language arts texts for teachers suggest that Steve won't be ready to compose for at least another year. Many reason that a thorough knowledge of phonics, as well as a strong sight vocabulary is necessary for children before they can write. Writing is an ordeal for most adults. As an act of kindness they would spare six year olds the pain of laboring through sounds and letters at a speed of less than one word per minute. If writing is provided for first grade children it is reduced to writing captions, copying, placing words in blanks, or writing the simple sentence.

I have long said we underestimate what children can do in the writing process. I didn't know what I was talking about. There was no way I could anticipate the meaning of this statement until I had time and funds necessary to observe children like Steve in the midst of their composing. Children have a natural urge to express, to make marks, to "play" with writing, to experiment boldly with new ways to put messages on paper. By denying children the opportunity to write before seven, we lose out on a stage of development when children can make some of the most rapid and delightful growth in writing of their entire lives.

Steve and his teacher are unaware that most school curriculum guides suggest the delay in writing. Steve writes anyway. When he writes, writing becomes an adventure that leads him into a highly elaborate process of problem solving.

Steve's teacher does not try to save him from problems in the writing process. She does not intrude with a long list of anticipated writing problems usually encountered by six year olds. Indeed, if Steve knew what they were, he probably would resist any thought of writing at all. His strong intent to write the details of hitting a tree, and playful asides about "whopping a big tree and falling off into the snow," carry him through most problems of spelling, space, and language.

Steve believes others are interested in his message. His playful, self-centeredness provides a protective cloak for fearless experimentation. He solves most problems important to him without the aid of the teacher. But, when help is needed, Steve's teacher waits until he is stymied by issues that thwart his purpose in writing. She plays this role effectively because she knows both the order and importance of developmental issues Steve needs to solve.

Steve is one of sixteen children involved in a study funded by the National Institute of Education to document how - and in what order - primary children change composing, spelling, and motor behaviors during the writing process. Eight of the children are in grade one, another eight are in grade three. They will be followed from grade one through two, and three through grade four. Primary emphasis has been placed on gathering information when children are actually engaged in the act of writing. In this way, the problem solving activities of children can be charted from grades one through four.

This study of children's composing is not a controlled design. Rather, it is a case study of sixteen children - in grades one and three - who were chosen because of their differences on a pre-selected developmental composing scale. The study seeks to identify and describe what is involved in composing for young children in order to explain the "why" of their behaviors during the writing process.

Each day three full-time researchers are with the children in their public school classrooms, carefully recording data as the children compose. Composing is broadly viewed from the child's painting, drawing, working with crayons, pens, pencils, to the composing of second, third, even up to ten drafts of a single selection. The data come from collections of all forms of composing, direct observation and video recordings of the children while writing.

The talk today will focus on what some first grade children do when they compose, the problems they solve, and our preliminary findings on the orders in which they solve them. Representative cases like Steve will be chosen to report data across many children in the study. Although it may appear that only one case is reported at a time, the data have support from the practices of other study children from similar developmental levels.

Teachers want to understand the dimensions of a child's development in the writing process in order to respond appropriately to the child's intentions. How hard it is to respond! The writing process is complex and children's behaviors are legion. Some sectors of development can be chosen for observation over others, however, thus simplifying the meaning of children's writing practices. So far the most useful sectors to observe are: the child's transition from oral to written discourse, use of time and space, and change from overt to covert actions. Let us examine these dimensions.

## Choosing Topics

Most first grade children operate in a very narrow time frame when first choosing their topics. Initially the topic is chosen almost as the child picks up the paper. This child has no more difficulty in choosing topics for composing than in choosing topics for play. Soon the time frame changes. There is more delay in topic choice. The delay increases and for a time some children encounter major barriers in topic choice. This comes with the child's first major consciousness of audience. If children are given many opportunities to write they gradually pass through this phase to being conscious of many writing options. During the composing of one paper, they are aware of several topics to choose for the next.

Less than one minute after Eddie sits in the writing center, he is busy working on his next paper. Eddie does not wrestle with topic choice since he will continue with the same theme of the last three weeks, "The Good Guys and the Bad Guys." Eddie writes as he plays, choosing the same theme until he tires of the subject. With each paper, the "Good Guys and the Bad Guys" fight all over again in both drawing and print with shooting between them until the good guys finally win.

Just as Eddie is about to draw, the researcher asks, "What will happen here?" (pointing to the space for drawing)

"I don't know," Eddie responds. He rarely knows beyond the next action couplet in the drawing. The gun is drawn, the gun shoots, the plane explodes. Eddie supplies the sound effects to go with each salvo. The next episode is drawn, and the next, until a whole series of shots and explosions end in victory for the good guys.

Steve is more advanced than Eddie. He sat in the writing center for several minutes mumbling, "I wonder what I should write about? Let's see now; I can't think of anything. Oh, I know, I'll write about sliding in the snow." Steve began by writing the title on the cover page "About Slading." Unlike Eddie, Steve writes before he draws. He can also speak several sentences ahead of what he will write before he writes it. The illustrations confirm rather than serve as a rehearsal for the writing. For six year old children there is a stage when long delays indicate a point of advancement. A rough sequence for topic choice development is contained in the following:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | No delay. | Child draws immediately and then writes. |
| 2. | Short delay - 2 minutes. | Child writes and then draws. |
| 3. | Long delay - 5-10 minutes; complete avoidance of writing. | Child is usually close to seven and beyond. Audience has effect on topic choice. Child is much more self-conscious. |
| 4. | Little delay. | Child is aware of growing repertoire of topic choice. Is able to rehearse topic choice prior to act of writing. |

Six year old Sarah, represented in the third category above, has a difficult time choosing a topic. She may label the cover with a title but the theme simply does not develop. To this point, topic choices have been easy for Sarah. She wrote about five books each week (total 220 words) on a range of familiar themes. Themes followed certain characters, "Woodsy Owl," or "Chipper," for as long as three to five episodes, disappeared and reappeared again for another series. The text assigned attributes to Chipper - "Chipper is nice. Chipper is beautiful. Chipper is loveable. I love Chipper." Children did not often understand her affective, subjective stories and told her so. But Sarah paid little heed to their responses.

It is now April and Sarah's playfulness has ended. It has ended as traumatically as a child who first thought she was playing with kittens in green pastures and suddenly discovers that the kittens are lions and she is imprisoned with them in a cage. Topic and word choices are hard to manage. She now hears the words of other children when they say, "What are you writing? That doesn't make sense." Now Sarah says, "I don't know what to write about; writing is hard; I'd rather do a workbook."

Sarah has just turned seven. She is an able reader. It is almost as if she has just discovered that mother and father are Santa Claus. The masks have been removed. Conventions, rules, the opinions of others, now dominate her consciousness. Play no longer insulates. The empty page is indeed empty.

Tim has made the transition through the third stage. Audience became a gradual part of his writing process. Tim writes on a wide range of topics from Wild West stories to a trip on his father's tug boat. He is conscious of audience and steadfastly defends his content from the challenges of other children. Tim hears their critiques, yet defends his choices with information. Note Tim's responses during this conference:

Chris: You should have told what happened after you got to the Cape Cod canal.

Tim: What do you mean?

Chris: Well, we don't know how you got home. You left us stranded at the Cape Cod canal.

Tim: But this isn't about how I got home. Look at the title; it's about a tug boat ride, dummy. The tug boat ride was over when we got to the canal.

In summary, audience does affect topic choice. For some young writers, choosing a topic to please oneself is an easy choice. It is as easy as choosing what to play after school. Then there is a time when choices are difficult. Most children make easy transitions when many audiences are provided in the classroom. But for children like Sarah, it was difficult for her to leave the strength of her own self-centeredness. The knowledge of audiences arrived abruptly. Change was upsetting. When children make the transition to a growing sense of audience, topic choices become easier; they are more secure in defending their content to others.

## Changes from Speech to Print

When children compose they show us how they make transitions from speech to print. There are many tracks of development that can be followed to show how children make the change. Only a few of the factors have been chosen for review in this talk today: drawing and rehearsal, use of space, use of speech to accompany writing.

### Drawing and Rehearsal

If Eddie doesn't know what he will draw beyond a first step, he surely does not know what he will write before he has drawn. Drawing is an important rehearsal step, not only for the rest of the drawing but especially for the writing that follows. Once created, the drawing becomes an idea bank as Eddie keeps referring to it for the substance of his writing.

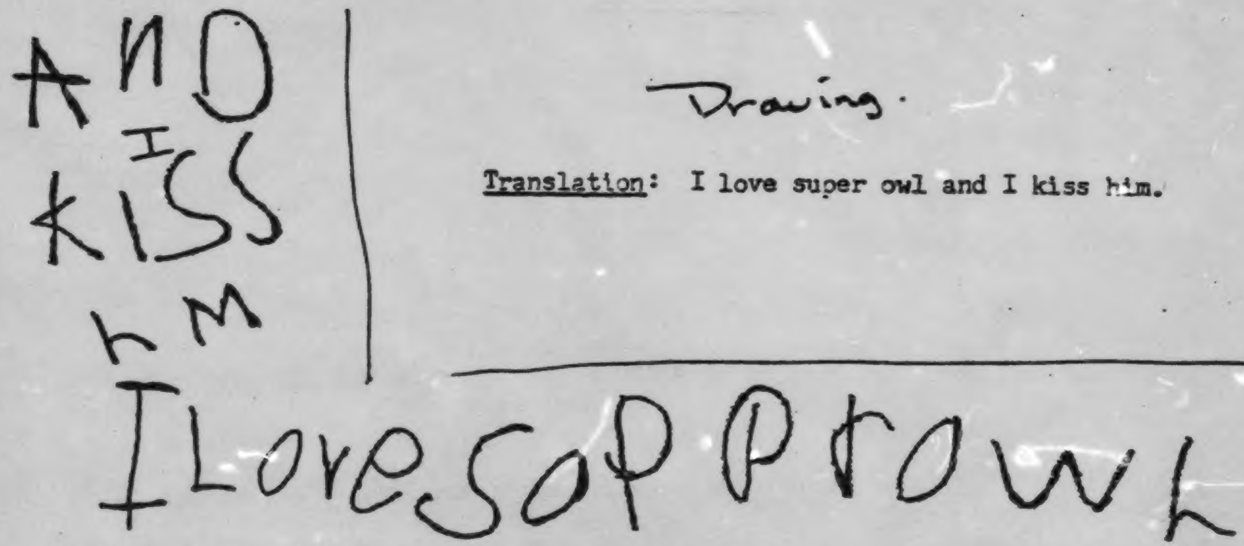
The drawing also helps Eddie change from speech to print. When Eddie was playing next to Matt in the block area moments before, Matt knew what Eddie meant when he said, "This is gonna be the secret part where we keep all the bombs." Matt can see what Eddie means before the situation tells him. But when Eddie writes, he must supply words to describe the situation in which the message will fall. If Eddie can draw before he writes, he creates the setting for the print, thus helping both himself and Matt who will read the paper later.

Drawing helps Eddie maintain control of his subject. It aids the choice and development of his topic. When Eddie can draw and control his subject, he writes more, gains greater practice in writing, as well as provides the setting for the teacher to help him with his paper. Content in the drawings usually exceeds the content in the writing.

Not all children need to draw before they write. More advanced children, like Steve, use drawings after the text has been written to illustrate a scene selected from the writing below. Still more advanced children do not need to illustrate at all, since the drawing takes time from revisions and more extended work on the text.

Use of Space

When children first write, they are merely concerned with the ingredients of the message, not the order or placement of words on the page. In figure 1, Toni's words rise and fall across the page,



AnD I kISS hM

ILoveSoPProwL

Drawing.

Translation: I love super owl and I kiss him.

with no spaces to show word separation. Speech runs together like "hamaneggs" and rises and falls with pitch, stress, and intonation.

Note Toni's message: "I love super owl and I kiss him." In this message Toni ran out of space on the right side and finished the line with a column of words down to the beginning of the line on the left side. The ingredients were present. Toni knew the meaning of the message. She assumed others could solve the problem as well.

When six year old Allison returned from a family wedding in New York, she wrote in columns, oriental style, with words going up the page. Direction was not important for Allison, only words emerging from other words.

## Use of Speech to Accompany Writing

Most beginning writers speak as they write. Writing is silent and abstract and speaking keeps them in touch with the writing process. Note how Eddie speaks and writes in Figure 2:

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sound line | the | | guh | guy | gut | gut | t | the gut guys | |
| Writing line | | the | g | | | r | t | | s |

Eddie says "the," then writes it as shown in the writing line. He sounds "guh," then writes a g. The ratio of sound to speech is in much greater quantity than the symbols written on the page. Although Eddie sounds at about a 3-1 ratio over print, it is not unusual for other, more advanced first grade children, to sound at a 2-1 ratio. Some barely sound at all.

These data are gathered through a very sensitive microphone placed on the lapel of the child when the child chooses to write. The microphone is attached to a video system that shows just when the symbol is placed on the paper in relation to the sound as in Figure 2. (page 11) Even when researchers sit next to the child recording observations of writing practice by hand, it is impossible to get the murmurings and voicings of children in relation to the letters written on the page.

Sound line: are are are are sh is i i is sh sh shootin
Writing line: R A

Eddie has a very difficult time making inner language serve him in a process as abstract as writing. He sounds letters, and repeats them until he *hears* what is appropriate for what he wants to write. Indeed, he juggles so many types of sounding that he ends up with "the good guys are is." The struggle with the sounds of individual letters and words is so great that the syntax suffers.

When Eddie speaks to his friends, he gets confirming nods or negative reactions. But writing is silent. It sits on the page, passive, without sound. He therefore supplies the sound for the page, almost making it speak back to him. Occasionally he glances up at the picture to get an overall sense of the message, gives a sound effect as in a shooting gun, and then returns to the sounding and speaking of message components. It is difficult in this linear process of putting one word in front of the other on this page, to portray the many systems - thinking, sounding, writing, that are occurring at the same time when Eddie writes.

Jenny sounds when she writes but her sounding is more advanced than Eddie's. Jenny has been writing longer than Eddie and draws on a richer oral language base to go with her writing. Jenny writes and sounds:

line 1 SOUND: l all, all, of, all of the, the, the, all of the reindeer
WRITING: L oll ave the
line 2 SOUND: rein, ruh, rein loved them, all, of, them, the muh, muh
WRITING: R iendrer lov e m

Jenny draws after she writes and even edits "them" to "him" after rereading the sentence. Jenny is dealing with a broader message unit and knows as far as five or six words ahead what will be written on the page.

Chris does much speaking when he writes but it is strictly a confirmation of what is on the page. Chris does not sound out letter components; he merely says the word he will write, "mechanic," then spells out loud, "m - e - c - k - a - n - i - c." Chris may murmur occasionally as he rereads, to feel the message on the tongue - to sense the aesthetics of sound, but this is all. Language also provides company for Chris when he writes, much as language works for a mechanic or carpenter in the process of assessing his work. A large share of Chris' language is procedural, "Where is that fourth step? Oh, steps twelve and thirteen are dumb; I can skip those. This is a robot that anyone can make." Note that the procedural comments are concerned with information, whereas Eddie's language emphasizes syntactical orientation and sounding of letter components.

Our analysis of spoken language in relation to written language is just beginning. Far more analysis is needed to understand the function of oral discourse when children write. Preliminary analyses show that most beginning writers use it and that there is probably a hierarchy of complexity to its function. Still, there are a few six year old children who do not use it at all. More work is needed to explain their writing behaviors.

In summary, language spoken at the time of writing seems to fulfill the following functions:

| | |
|---|---|
| What do I want to say? | The child hears what he wants to say by speaking and then writes it. |
| How can I make it sound better? (feel better?) | Prosodics - stress, pitch intonation patterns, emerge as the child repeats the message for the quality of sound. |
| Did I spell the word correctly? | The child sounds the word through in sequence after it is written. |
| How do I keep on track? | The child merely repeats the letters as they are written. The child seems to be keeping his place as the word is recalled more from visual memory than auditory memory systems. |
| What was I saying anyway? or What is the next word? | Child rereads outloud from the beginning...up to current word and then adds on the new word. |
| What is the next step? (information) | Child consults drawing or makes a procedural comment. (I need more stuff about the planet.) |
| How much more do I have to do? | As the child gauges the material written, other pages are read, remaining pages are counted. |
| How can I let others know what is happening so far? | To friend: "Look, when this sled comes down the hill it is going to hit this tree here." This is usually a reference to the picture. |

## How Do Children Change What They Write?

When children revise they demonstrate the time frame in which they function in the writing process. Just as children show the time frame in which they operate by the way they rehearse before writing, they also show time operations by the unit and place of revision. For example, when Eddie changes a word, any revision is likely to come only as the word is just composed. Eddie was the same child who had to draw before writing and had little advance concept of his message beyond a few words.

Steve operates in a broader time frame than Eddie. He can tell at least a sentence ahead what will be written on the paper. Drawings follow writing. Finally, after he writes the last page, he is able to return to add or change information on pages written earlier. For example, Steve wrote in his "Sledding" story:

> I slad dawn hills a lot.

In his illustration done after the writing, Steve included details on how his sled hit a tree. Steve noticed this on rereading his booklet. He adds the following:

> I het a tree and I go the rast of the way.

He is still dissatisfied, turns to a new page and changes his message again:

> I lik slading dawn hills a lot. I het a tree
> and I go the rast ov the way dawn the hill.

Chris is the most advanced. He has a well-developed plan for composing his booklet on building robots and explains in advance the seventeen steps necessary for its construction. When the booklet is completed he removed two steps as stupid and unnecessary.

As children see ahead in their composing, they also review their products with a more expansive backward vision. Usually these children have successfully solved the major problems of handwriting and spelling and are composing at a sufficient rate (four words per minute and up), thus gaining a broader view of the entire composing process. Word by word writers have word by word visions both in forward and reverse time patterns. Children with a broader vision use broader time units and make more advanced semantical and syntactical changes. Chris lined out a word written ten minutes earlier from "We whipped rocks across the water" to "we skimmed rocks across the water."

New information provides its own kind of problem for the young writer. More advanced six year olds soon are aware that new information presents problems of space and aesthetics. Note Chris' first encounter earlier this year with the space problems attendent to new information in this conference with his teacher:

| | |
|---|---|
| Teacher: | I see that you were able to put in the word "may" to show that "Brontosaurus' may travel in families." (Chris had been able to sandwich in the small word without erasing.) But you didn't say why they travel in families. |
| Chris: | They travel in families to protect the young. |

**Teacher:** Do you think that is important information?

**Chris:** Yes, but there isn't any place to put it. (The writing goes from left to right over to the right hand margin at the bottom of the paper. Above this writing is a picture of a brontosaurus.)

**Teacher:** Look the paper over and show me where you could write it in.

**Chris:** There isn't any. (voice rising)

**Teacher:** Look the entire paper over and put your hand on any space where there isn't writing or drawing. (There is space above the drawing.)

**Chris:** Well, I could put it up here (motions to top of paper) but it would look stupid. The other part is down here.

**Teacher:** How could you show they were connected?

**Chris:** I could put an arrow down here pointing to the part that's at the top.

**Teacher:** Good, but you'll need to connect the arrow with the top. This is what writers do when they are getting their books ready for the publisher.

Chris knew additional information would create a mess. Now his teacher has shown him how to control new information when there is a problem of space. She has also shown him that this draft is temporary, that rewriting is necessary.

## Summary

At first, writing is a simple act for most first grade children. Writing begins and ends abruptly. Problems are solved within a narrow time frame. They quickly choose a subject, pick up a pencil, draw, combine some sounds and symbols, and writing emerges. There is little premeditation to write, nor is the product contemplated once the paper is done. Just as in play, doing the paper is an end in itself. When children write in order to play, they talk, make sound effects, laugh and end their actions abruptly. The sounds they make are highly complex, ranging from attempts to match sound and symbol, words spoken before, during and after writing, attempts to reorient a new word to syntax, to language used to "play" with other children. These same children are unaware of the many problems they solve in the writing process: transitions from speech to print, placement of words on a page, or the matching of sounds and symbols. If words are changed, they are changed when they are written. Their self-centeredness protects them from the opinions of others. They experiment without fear.

Children expand the time and space dimensions of their activity as they continue to write. Activity is less overt. There is less need for visual rehearsal. Drawings are more often done after the child has written. Overt language continues to accompany the writing but contains fewer sound effects or sounding of letters. Now the language is characterized by: the emergence of procedural statements, broader rereading for syntactical sense, minor sounding of letters, and the statement of words after they are written. Revision involves

Spelling and handwriting changes with the first addition of new information into the text. There is more conscious choice of the topic and the child grows in awareness of other children's writing and opinions but not to the point of responding to them.

Still more advanced first grade children are less overt in language and illustration. They operate in a much broader space-time dimension. They may wrestle with topic choice but only to choose the best option. They rehearse inwardly. That is, they can rehearse topics without drawing or speaking well in advance of the commencement of writing. They may rehearse while reading, listening to conversation, or by watching television. There is a strong advance concept of what will be written on a paper, even to the point of sharing five to ten steps or several paragraphs. The audience factor is much stronger. These children can articulate the opinions of others and maintain their own positions. Drawing is no longer necessary; for a few it even disappears. Some may be completely silent as they write. If there is language to accompany the writing, it is usually procedural and confirmatory. These children are capable of revising both the content and language of their writing. They are sensitive to the need to add information provided they have solved the space problems accompanying revision.

First grade children will write if we let them. There is an abundance of energy for expression that is waiting to be tapped. If we will only get out of the way, let children lead, then observe, follow and aid them intelligently, who knows what writing we will be privileged to read...and in a very short time.

# CASE STUDY OF A NINE YEAR OLD WRITER

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The classroom door squeaked. The circle of third graders looked up as the visitor came into the room. "Shhh," one child said, beckoning him to join the circle. "Andrea's about to share her final draft."

Andrea smiled, then ducked her pale blue eyes behind her paper. The nine-year-old glanced up. "It's not very long," she apologized. "I had much more in my third draft, but...here's what I kept."

> I snuggled deeper in the blanket. I felt uneasy. Something big was missing. Then Daddy came and lay down with me. He made a pocket with his legs and I crawled in. He patted my head. I felt happy. Nothing was missing anymore.

The visitor's pleased eyes met mine. "I got here just in time," he said.

I thought of the drafts and redrafts Andrea had made over the last three weeks. He'd heard the final draft, but he'd missed the process of creating it. "I guess we see it differently," I said to the visitor. "I'd say you got here just too late."

Through a grant from the National Institute of Education, Donald Graves, Susan Sowers and I aren't too late. On a day-to-day basis, we watch the writing process of eleven school aged children.

The childfen are in the first and third grades, and we will follow them for two years. We selected these children because they represent a wide span of developmental levels, ranging from five-year-old John who cannot draw a circle, to nine-year-olds, Amy and Andrea, who both draft and redraft their writing.

Writing process research is virgin territory. The finished writing of children is often analyzed, but most researchers are 'too late' to watch the process. We need to observe children composing, or we cannot ask good questions. Helda Bolgar's chapter in Wolman's Handbook of Clinical Psychology states, "Whenever an investigator approaches a new area in which relatively little is known, the case study is his first methodological choice."

Through case-study of eleven children, we want to build a tentative developmental map of how children change as writers. We want to raise questions and form hypotheses which later can be related to larger populations.

This paper is the story of one child's sequences of revision. It's a narrative account of Andrea's changes from September, when she neither reread nor revised her writing, until March. During these seven months Andrea has learned to make writing hard. Now she sees print as unfinished, and views writing as selection.

## Procedures

No studies exist which document a nine-year-old's process of learning to refocus, restructure and revise writing. Andrea and her classmates have led us into uncharted territory. A significant portion of our work therefore, has been aimed at devising and refining procedures for eliciting and recording information in the revision process. There has been no precedent to follow.

The methods I use are these:

1. As Andrea rereads, reconsiders and revises her work, she is asked to 'think-outloud.' I record her comments and her behaviors, and these are later typed into columns. The first and third columns, below, come from xeroxing Andrea's drafts and then adding numbers which correlate with notes on her comments and behaviors. Cross outs are shown as in #3. Insertions are shown as in #6.

| Draft 1 | Notes | Draft 2 |
|---|---|---|
| -Bang!-There-goes-<br>3<br>2the-hamper.-Daddy-must<br>-be-almost-done-with-<br>his-shower. I can't wait.<br>"Jill, make room on the<br>sofa. Dad's coming." "No,<br>I'll move over when I<br>want."<br>1 | 1. Rereads. "I gotta think of a new beginning."<br>2. "I might leave out this first part and just start, "I can't wait." I'll try it down here (at bottom of page).<br>3. Scratches out beginning lines.<br>4. (Recopies on bottom of page.)<br>5. Scratches out 'Susie.' "When she's mad she calls me Susan."<br>6. Inserts 'Susan'.<br>7. "Usually when she's real mad she calls me Susan Sible." - adds Sible. | I$_4$can't wait.<br>"Jill, make room.<br>Dad's coming out<br>of the shower."<br>"NOO!" she said.<br>"I will when I want<br>-Susie- (Susan) (Sible)<br>5 6 7 |

2. Data is also collected from interviews. Some of the questions I've often asked are:

   ---Why'd you make this change in your writing?
   ---What are you planning to do next?
   ---Have you run into any new problems in this piece?
   ---What do you think of your writing?
   ---Which is your best piece of writing so far? Why? Which is your worst? Why?
   ---What do you have to do in order to be a good writer?

3. Every draft of every piece of writing has been xeroxed and kept. Ninety-five percent of them have accompanying process and or interview notes.

Andrea's story will be grouped into four chronological chapters:

1. September - October 15
2. October 15 - November 30
3. December - January
4. February - March

Her steps in revision will be described, with an emphasis especially on changes in these two areas:

1. Print becomes a revisable media.
2. Revision: correction, or guiding act?

## SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 15

In September, Andrea wrote a book about a homesick Chinese girl. Each day Andrea added three or four hundred words onto her picaresque narrative of Lin-Su. She wrote 15.5 words a minute, a fairly high rate for nine year olds. Andrea had mastered the mechanics of writing and now it was as if there were no challenges to be met or decisions to be made.

"To be a good writer," Andrea said in early September, "you have to know what you are writing about." That was her only criterion.

The subject predetermined the words. All she had to do was put it down.

Andrea's words were not only pre-determined. They were final. She did not revise. Occasionally Andrea corrected the word at her pencil point: adding a missing vowel, changing the shape of a crooked letter. But she made no content revision. Print was not revisable.

On October 3, Andrea's teacher intercedes. "Instead of writing another story, "Pat Howard said, "tomorrow, bring something to school which you know and care about...something that matters to you."

Pat Howard believes when children write about their dog's hurt foot, or their baby sister, they will revise more than if they write make believe stories about gum-drop land. These are her reasons:

1. When children have something real to write about, they have a standard-of measurement (truth) which motivates them to find the precise words, to achieve the right tone.
2. When children know and care about their subject, they want to communicate it.
3. Real experiences can fit onto half a page... stories often take pages to develop. Shorter pieces are more revisable.

The next day Andrea brought a shredding bird's nest to school. Becky was assigned to interview Andrea. They hid under puffy parkas on the coatrack at the end of the classroom. Becky cleared her throat, like journalists do. "Where'd you find this nest, young lady?"

"Under a tree."

Becky tried again. "Did you see any feathers near it?"

"Nope."

"Did you see the nest being made?"

Andrea didn't answer. Instead she poked a hole between the parkas and peeked out at her classmates.

"Wait," Becky said, forgetting her newspaperman voice. "Andrea, why'd you bring the nest to school?"

The question worked. Andrea started to tell Becky how she always wanted to fly, and so began to study birds.

"Are you two ready to write yet?" Mrs. Howard asked, peeking down between the parkas. They nodded and scrambled back to their desks. Becky had done her job; Andrea had found her story.

Mrs. Howard watched Andrea pick up her pencil. She hoped this time Andrea's title and first lines (lead) would be focused and show a point of view. But Andrea wrote "The Bird's Nest," and began a long-winded explanation of how she found the nest under a tree (with no birds near by), brought it to school, and remembered trying to fly when she was younger...

## Revision as Correction...by the Teacher

## Print Becomes Less Permanent

Andrea's teacher intercedes. "Is your story really 'The Bird's Nest'?" "What's important about that nest?"

Andrea looked at the title, then began to erase it. Her teacher said, "Just scratch it out."

Andrea had always erased her mistakes to hide them. Now she doesn't want to use the paper with the scratched-out title. She got a clean sheet, and began again.

Mrs. Howard drew a line under Andrea's beginning. "See if you can say it differently," she said. As Andrea tried one lead after another, her careful handwriting opened into a loose scrawl.

Learning to fly

Once when I was very little I got a
hank to fly So I tryed jumping
at things and tryed ~~to~~ float up
and across I tryed and
tryed til my father made me
and my sister big cardboar
butterfly... wings.

For the first time, print seemed less permanent to her. And writing became selection.

Lead 1: Once when I was little I got a hank to fly so I tried jumping off things and tried to float up and across...

Lead 2: I always wanted to fly, but whenever I tried, I always fell Kaboom!

Lead 3: Kaboom! That hurt! Why can't I fly?

Andrea reread her leads outloud. She starred #3. "This is the best," she said. "I don't know why."

## Revision as Correction...By the Child

Later, Andrea will become more articulate about her reasons for selecting one piece as better than another. She will also find it easier to localize, to respond differently to specific sections of her draft. For now, choices seem general, and the criterion for the choices is unconscious.

When Andrea wrote about playing baseball a week later, her teacher didn't prompt her to 'find her story' through writing leads. Andrea neatly wrote the first title that came to her mind. When she finished I Like Batting, she read her lines, and then reread them.

> I like to bat because the feel of the ball on the bat makes you proud that you can hit it. But you can't just pick the bat up and throw the ball and hit it if it's your first time.
>
> I can now because I practice alot. I practice with my sister only we don't use a wooden bat and a hard ball. We use a wiffle ball and a bat that is plastic...

Andrea shifted around in her seat and again reread her paper. "This part about the wiffle ball doesn't go here," she sighed. "It's in the wrong place." But how can a whole paragraph be moved?

The spatial problems overwhelm Andrea. She asks for help. Her teacher suggests she write the paragraph on a separate sheet of paper, and use 'codes' - in this case, a star - to show its position in the paper. For the first time, Andrea's drafts begin to resemble the working manuscript of a writer.

When Andrea finished I Like Batting, she didn't need a reader to ask, "What's this really about?" "Should anything be changed?" She had become her own critic. She reread what she has written and then revises independently through correction.

Between September 1 and October 15, she made important breakthroughs.

- ---Andrea began to see print as temporary. Her handwriting in leads and first drafts became a loose, messy scrawl which suggests she expects to discard them.
- ---Andrea's teacher encouraged her to use 'codes' for revision.
- ---Revision moves from correction by the teacher to correction by the child. Andrea internalizes her teacher's questions and begins to be her own critic.

## OCTOBER 15 - NOVEMBER 30

### Revision Becomes a Guiding Act

By late October, Andrea thinks about focus before she begins to write. On October 23, she lists possible topics and immediately focuses each one. This is part of her list:

Animals (the bear we saw)
Camping (in Canada, and what I saw)
Fishing (with my Daddy, at Winnepasawki Lake)
Hiking (in Canada, on the mountains)

Andrea chooses Camping in Canada. Her reasons show her new concern for focus.

"It's a good topic because I spent a lot of time in Canada so I can tell what happened and put it into short words. Instead of telling my whole trip, I'll just put one thing down that was a big experience for me."

## Andrea Uses A Strategy Which Later is Used for More Advanced Revision

Andrea decides to further narrow her topic by writing several different beginnings. This time she draws her own line underneath each.

In September, Andrea did not list possible topics, focusing her list, selecting her subject. She did not try out possible beginnings before arriving at her first line. The first words Andrea wrote at the beginning of a writing episode were used as the lead to her piece. This chart shows the changes which have happened in Andrea's writing.

Number of words written before Andrea finds her lead sentence.

| Date | Title | | Number of Words |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9/18/78 | Clockmaker | | 0 |
| 9/21/78 | Lin-Su | | 0 |
| 10/3/78 | Teacher | | 0 |
| 10/12/78 | Kaboom | prompted | 91 |
| 10/16/78 | Batting | | 0 |
| 10/23/78 | Surprise in Canada | | 258 |
| 10/ /78 | My Dog's Pill | | 163 |

In a longitudinal study of art students, Jacob Getzels and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi found the students they studied who later became successful artists were those who took more time to select objects to draw, and changed directions several times while drawing. Some began drawing in one medium and then switched to others. Other students did exploratory sketches on the side to help them discover their subject.

Andrea appears to be engaged in a similar sort of exploratory process. At first glance, her leads seem ~~to be~~ different tacks toward a subject.

My Dog's Heartworm Pill

1. Everytime I come home from school I have to give my dog a pill and it is VERY VERY hard.
2. There, now you won't see it. The pill is way down deep in the cookie.
3. Down it goes, down, Eat it! Oh, no, how am I going to get you to eat it?
4. Now will you please eat it. Just once, for me, the one that feeds you?

A closer look, however, suggests that at this stage Andrea's leads all represent points along the same progression. Each lead is deeper into the sequence of events in Andrea's story. Many of the leads wouldn't make sense without the preceeding leads to explain them. They are a continuation of each other.

If the lines separating the leads for My Dog's Heartworm Pill were taken out, the sentences would read as one continuous story. The subject and structure of her pieces seem to be evident in Andrea's first leads. It is only the actual beginning sentence which she finds through her early attempts at writing leads. Andrea has not yet learned to simultaneoualy consider a variety of perspectives.

Yet she has learned important preliminary lessons. She has learned a stance of openness which she'll later use as she explores a variety of perspectives on her subject. She has learned a strategy for revision, even though she is not yet considering different perspectives, voices, or ways of structuring a piece of writing.

Andrea now has a mechanism for revision. She has a strategy for carving her subject out of her inventory of information. In *Surprise in Canada*, for example, she uses a variety of 'codes' to organize her trial-and-error search for a lead sentence.

| Steps | Code |
|---|---|
| Lists 10 possible topics. | Numbers, 1-10. |
| Parenthesis for details beside each topic. | (     ) |
| Crosses out 'bad' topics, saying "too big" or "boring." | --------- |
| One star beside possible topic. | * |
| Two stars for selected topic. | ** |
| Lists 1-3 for leads which she'll write. | 1.<br>2.<br>3. |
| Draws line under each lead as lead, as she writes for closure. | ________ |
| Scratches out first part of fourth lead. | -------- |
| Recopies second half of fourth lead onto sheet of paper. | |

## At This Stage, Revision is a Physical Process

Revision, for Andrea, is a physical process. She lays the whole story out in front of her. Then she stars and underlines the good part, and crops the rest. Andrea constructs her writing with her hands.

Piaget points out that activity which is carried out in the physical world can later be internalized and carried out mentally. For now, Andrea needs to physically manipulate her options (and she considers only a limited number of them). Later, she'll be able to weigh and consider alternatives in her mind.

Andrea has learned to throw away. She is also learning to keep. Once she finds a line or section she wants to use, she copies it exactly onto her new paper. Earlier in the year, she often referred only generally to the firstdraft while writing the second. She made many unconscious changes. There was no comparison or choice involved. Drafts were separate and, in a sense, revisions were arbitrary. In order to make deliberate changes in a draft, Andrea has to learn to keep as well as to cut.

## At This Stage, Revision Means Finding the Topic

Andrea's changes during October and November are all made during the beginning stages of the composing process (prewriting). Most of her revision codes are used before Andrea selects her beginning. In

Surprise in Canada, Andrea uses 13 revision codes before selecting her beginning sentence, and only 4 once her lead was chosen. Similarly, in My Dog's Pill, she uses 7 revision codes before she finds her beginning, and none afterward.

Revision means finding the topic. The topic determined the piece. At this stage, Andrea is not conscious that any one topic can be told in many different ways. Once she finds a topic and lead sentence she likes, she may later cross out a word, change a spelling, or add an adjective. But it is as if there are no major decisions to be made. Once she selects her subject, the story seems to write itself.

Andrea's revision at this point can be described as a physical cutting away of unneeded introductory information so as to uncover a lead sentence which is focused and active. Despite the obvious limits of such revision, important breakthroughs have again been made.

-Andrea has adopted and refined strategies which bring revision into the prewriting stage of composition.

-Andrea writes leads independently now, and is willing to write and discard an increasing number of words.

-Andrea has learned to keep as well as to discard. She carves out lines which please her and then she copies these exactly. Everything is no longer in flux. Choices between drafts are deliberate.

-Andrea used to ask, "What's this really about?" after she wrote a draft. Now she is aware of focus as she begins to write. What was at first correction has now become a guiding act.

## DECEMBER - JANUARY

## Revision Moves Deeper Into the Draft

### Revision Becomes Abstract

"Today is a big day," Andrea said on December 2nd. "I finally finish my beginning to The Big Fish." She had written and rewritten her lead many times, writing 287 words and using 18 revision codes.

> Me and my father were fishing at a lake. I looked in the water and saw a quick flash. It was a school of fish that looked like silver dollars. . .

That day Andrea finished her story. As usual, she wrote the middle sections of her paper without considering or reconsidering word choice. When she copied the first draft into final form, however, she was dissatisfied.

"I want to make the sections where I catch the fish shorter, quicker," she said, as if she wanted her words to match the suddenness of the tug on her line. Andrea starred the troublesome part, and on a separate bit of paper, listed numbers 1-3, as if she were writing leads.

Beside numbers 1 and 2, Andrea rewrote the section two different ways. Then she circled number 3. She was ready to try again. For a few minutes, her pencil was still. Then she brought it to the paper, held it there, ready to write. She pulled away.

The researcher asked, "What'd you almost write?" Andrea blushed. "I was going to say, 'Just then a quick jerk awakened me and I looked and saw my pole bending,'" she said. "But it was too long."

The line Andrea considers--and rejects--is less interesting than the process of turning it over in her mind. David Olsen makes this point in his chapter from Arts, Cognition and Basic Skills.

"As we examine a rock by turning it over in our hands, we are aware of the fact that we acquire knowledge about the rock, but the skilled manipulation that gave rise to the knowledge of the rock is transparent to us." Olsen continues, ". . . applying that feat of manipulation to widely divergent objects or events will result in the development of a skill of wide applicability." Revision is becoming an internal process for Andrea.

In The Big Fish episode, content revision moves into the main body of Andrea's drafts. Previously, Andrea's revision showed a willingness to suspend definition during the prewriting stage. Now exploration continues after she finds her lead.

This chart of where revision codes are used, illustrates that Andrea now revises after she chooses her lead.

| Date | Title | Number of Codes Used Before Lead is Chosen | Number of Codes Used After Lead is Chosen |
|---|---|---|---|
| 10/23/78 | Surprise in Canada | 13 | 4 |
| 11/6/78 | My Dog's Pill | 7 | 0 |
| 11/27/78 | The Big Fish | 18 | 29 |
| 3/ /79 | The Birthday Teddy | 11 | 18 |
| 3/ /79 | Caspar's Bath | 8 | 22 |

Andrea invents and adapts new codes to help her revise and rewrite sections within her draft. She begins to use a form of brackets to separate sections which need to be reworked. Stars, triangles, and even rabbit heads are used to insert lines into specific places in a draft.

In their book on the creative process, Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi emphasize that stages of defining and solving the problem (in this case, the subject) are not compartmentalized. The most creative artists in their study continued problem-finding throughout the creative process. They kept the structure of the problem from crystallizing too soon, and experimented with various problem-solving strategies in the course of their work.

Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi suggest, "A creative problem cannot be fully visualized in the mind's eye; it must be discovered in the interaction with the elements that constitute it."

## Old Strategies Are Used in New Ways

In January, when Andrea writes leads to Snuggling With My Father, she explores a variety of perspectives on her subject. For the first time her leads do not follow a single chronology. They are each a different attempt to discover the shape of her subject. This seems to be a further step in Andrea's ability to internally manipulate options.

These are some of her leads:

1. My father came in from hauling wood. "Daddy," I asked, "Will you lie down with me?"
2. "I can't wait," I said, jumping on the couch. . .
3. Bang! There goes the hamper. Daddy must be done with his shower. . .
4. I snuggled deeper in the blanket. Something big was missing. . .

Finally Andrea has a lead she likes.

> I snuggle deeper in the blanket. I feel uneasy. Something big is missing.

"I like it," she says, "but now the hardest part is how, with the same feeling, I can get my father to the sofa." Writers have often said that the greatest challenge in writing is getting the person from here to there, and now Andrea struggles with the same problem.

She has a hard time moving people about in her writing. Transitions are hard because she wants to put down every little step, every detail. "It is hard to go from one exciting part to another, without putting down all the stuff that comes between them," she explains. "I want to write with details, but to skip from one important detail to another."

Now Andrea takes a bit of paper and numbers 1-3. "I'll put down lots of different ways for how I can get my father to the sofa," she says, "and then I'll choose." Andrea uses her strategy for writing leads to consider alternative ways to write a difficult passage. In

The Big Fish, a strategy was used to correct a troublesome passage; now she uses it as a guiding act.

These are some of the steps Andrea has taken in December and January.

- Andrea develops and adapts strategies to bring revision deeper into her draft.
- Previously, Andrea's topic determined her draft. She revised before selecting a topic, but not afterwards. Now she makes deliberate choices throughout the writing.
- Andrea defers closure on her structure and subject. They change as she writes.
- Andrea begins to internalize. She considers options without putting them on paper.
- Andrea seems to be able to consider a wide variety of perspectives and approaches to her subject. Her leads no longer are part of a single chronology.
- Revision of the internal sections of her draft begins as correction, and moves forward in the writing process, becoming a guiding act.

## FEBRUARY - MARCH

### Revision For Focus Moves Underground

In January, Andrea wrote 266 words before she found her lead sentence. Now, in March, she often picks up her pencil and, straight away, begins her draft. She doesn't list possible topics, and, one by one, eliminate them. She doesn't practice a variety of beginning lines before selecting one.

Number of words written before Andrea finds her lead sentence:

| Date | Title | Number of Words |
|---|---|---|
| 9/18/78 | Clockmaker | 0 |
| 9/21/78 | Lin-Su | 0 |
| 10/ /78 | Teacher | 0 |
| 10/ /78 | Kaboom prompted | 91 |
| 10/16/78 | Batting | 0 |
| 10/23/78 | Surprise in Canada | 258 |
| 10/ /78 | My Dog's Pill | 163 |
| 11/27/78 | The Big Fish | 287 |
| 1/ /79 | Saturday Nights | 192 |
| 1/15/79 | Snuggling | 266 |
| 3/ 1/79 | Birthday Teddy Bear | 46 |
| 3/14/79 | Washing Caspar | 14 |
| 3/20/79 | Pop-wheels | 10 |

Has Andrea returned, full-circle, to the unconsidered writing of last September? Is she again "putting any old words down?" Has she given up the struggle?

"It's easier for me to start a piece of writing now," Andrea says. "I have a better idea for topics which will work, and the leads come to me easily." These are some of her recent leads, written with very little revision:

> Washing Caspar
>
> "Come on, Caspar," I firmly say. The dog squats down. I drag her by the collar. . .
>
> The Wonderful Birthday Teddy
>
> My sister handed me a big box. "Open it," she cried. I did, and in the box was a big ball of fur with eyes. "HAPPY BIRTHDAY!" my parents shouted. . .

Andrea seems to have an implicit sense for the shape of a piece. She no longer needs to include in order to exclude. She is able to eliminate winding introductions without first putting them all down on the paper, and then crossing them out.

Andrea seems able to not only internally tighten her leads, but also her transitions. When she writes a first draft, her writing slows down as she comes to points of transition.

"What are you stopping to think about?" I asked Andrea recently. "I'm thinking of all the things that happened after I opened my birthday teddy bear," she said, ". . . the pancake supper, the games. . . But they aren't important to my story." This is what she wrote:

> . . . I took the fur out of the box and it was a big brown teddy bear. . . "Do you like it?" my sister asked.
>
> That night I slept with my bear. Its soft fur felt warm and cuddly. . .

This time Andrea finds her focus without having to physically cut away excess words. Crisp transitions are easy for her now.

## New Revision Concerns. . . and Strategies

Andrea's revision codes have changed. She rarely uses brackets to designate sections which need to be condensed, or lists numbers for leads. She seems to bracket troublesome sections in her mind's eye, to revise abstractly.

"I think my writing has changed," she says now. "My biggest problem is how to put down everything people need to know, but to still have it sound right." Then she thought for a minute. "I used to have a different kind of a problem."

Now Andrea revises to answer her reader's questions. In early March she wrote a first draft to Painting. She wrote effortlessly, again writing 15.5 words a minute. She wrote without listing topics and without writing possible leads. Superficially, her writing behavior seemed similar to September. This time when she finished a draft, however, she gathered a group of readers. Amy, Shawn, Robi and Diane pulled their chairs closer to Andrea's desk. "Will you listen to this," she said, "and tell me where it isn't clear."

> Hmmm. What color should we use? Jill and
> I pick black for a base color. We start
> clearing away an area, and then we sweep it.
> We get two paint brushes and start. What a
> sloppy job, but I love doing it. . .

The children were full of questions. "What are you painting?" Shawn asked. "I can't even tell." "Why was it fun?" Amy wondered. "You said it was colorful--what colors?"

> to paint the cellar floor
> Hmmm. What color should we use/ Jill and I
> picked black for a base color. . . What a sloppy
> job but I love doing it/because we didn't worry
> about getting paint on us.

Later Andrea reread the draft to herself. With a carot, she added words and phrases to answer her readers' questions.

Amy watched as Andrea worked quietly, adding lines, crossing out paragraphs, drawing arrows. One page grew into three. "That happens to me, too," Amy said. "I start with three lines, then it becomes three pages. After ten days or so, I get it back to three lines."

Andrea nodded. "Writing was easier in the fall," she said, and giggled. "I guess this year I learned to make writing hard."

## Summary

The story of how Andrea learned to make writing hard has been presented as a sequence of chronological stages. In retrospect, the process can also be viewed as three interwoven threads. The story of Andrea is the story of one child's *sequences of learning revision*, and it is the story of *changes in how and why Andrea revises.*

| Sequences of Learning to Revise | Why Andrea Revises | How Andrea Revises |
|---|---|---|
| What begins as correction by the teacher later becomes correction by the child. | Andrea's attention is at first directed towards focus; later, towards answering her readers' questions. | At first, Andrea keeps every word she writes; later she has a flexible approach towards a draft. She can cut and she can keep. |
| What begins as correction later becomes a guiding act. | | She develops a strategy for cut-and-keep which is used for progressively more abstract revisions. |
| What begins as overt, explicit, later moves underground and becomes implicit. | | Revision begins as a physical process and later seems to move underground and become abstract. |

# Chapter II

## The Writing Process

Alison reread her first sentence. She frowned and bit into the soft wood of her pencil; a tear formed in the corner of her eye. Glaring at the paper she muttered, "Stupid," and rumpled her paper into a ball. Alison was in sixth grade and wanted to write about the death of her dog, Muffin. The first line didn't do justice to her feelings.

Each day Alison writes in class. Today is Wednesday and since Monday she has known she would write about the death of her dog. Since then a series of images and impressions have rehearsed their way to the surface for inclusion in her story about Muffin. Last year a torrent of words and sentences would have poured on to the page. This year she is a dissatisfied writer. She is paralyzed by options as well as the apparent inability of her first words to meet personal expectations.

What Alison doesn't know is that what reaches the page is the end of a long line of reductions from the original swirl of memories about her dog. Figure 1 below shows the progression of Alison's reductions to the print that finally reaches the page:

| Thought → | One choice Reduction → | Telegraph Words → | Conventional Order |
|---|---|---|---|
| image: play with Muffin on lawn. | | | |
| image: Muffin next to her on bed. | image: Muffin on the bed. | image: Dog on bed. | |
| smell: wet dog hair after rain. | new image: hand across Muffin's head | words: bed, lump on the bed; he's there, feel him nice, pat | "I felt him on the bed next to me." |
| texture: feel of fur. | | | |
| image: combing the dog. | | | |
| image: hugging the dog. | | | |
| words: nice, miss him, cry | | | |

Since Monday Alison has been rehearsing a host of images and memory systems. But when she writes, only one can be chosen to work on at a time. Alison chooses the image of Muffin on the bed next to her. Since Alison's communication will deal with words, she now converts images to words. The words swirl in telegraphic form and in no particular order. Her final act is to put the words in an order that others will understand: "I felt him on the bed next to me." Compared with the range of images and words Alison has entertained in the process, the sentence is but a ghost of her impressions. A year ago Alison would have assumed the missing material was represented in the sentence. Not now. She knows the words are inadequate. Worse, she does not see any promise in them for reworking the image. Alison is stalled.

Alison's frustration could be that of a seven year old, a doctoral student, or professional writer. All go through the same process of reduction. The only difference between the amateur and the professional is that the professional is less surprised. Writers who compose regularly have stronger links between the part (sentence) and the whole (the overall story or article) and expect that first attempts will probably be poor choices. They rewrite for focus and better choice, rework other images, until words match that inner "yes" feeling. Then they write to add what is naturally subtracted through the very process of writing itself.

What teacher hasn't heard these words: "I'm stuck. This is dumb. It's no use. Now what do I do?" Essentially these writers are asking, "Where am I?" They feel the lack in their words which have been reduced from richer images and intentions. They don't know where the sentence before them fits in with their original, overall story. Fear even blurs the images and words that once seemed so real in rehearsal.

Teachers can answer children's questions only if they know the writing process from both the inside and the outside. They know it from the inside because they work at their writing; they know it from the outside because they are acquainted with research that shows what happens when people write.

This chapter will portray what is involved in the writing process. The same process ingredients will be mirrored in three very different writers: my own writing as an adult, Mary, first grade, and John, fourth grade. Process ingredients will be shown from choice of topic and rehearsal through first composing to text revisions. Finally, voice, the force underlying all process components, will be shown.

One problem. Don't be fooled by the orders in which I describe the writing process. I have to use words, which follow each other in systematic and conventional fashion for you to understand what I am about. This suggests that writers, or thought, follow in systematic order for everyone. Not so. When a person writes, so many components go into action simultaneously that words fail to portray the real picture. For example, in showing Alison's thought reduction, it is impossible to portray speed, or the flow of images, body memory systems simultaneous to reduction. Alison's reduction may have been entirely unconscious, and occur from a thousandth of a second to two seconds. Though orders are unpredictable, what is involved in the writing process can be described with profit.

## BEGINNINGS - CHOICE AND REHEARSAL:

The writing process has many beginning points. It can begin as unconscious rehearsal. A person observes a child at play, two dogs fighting, or recall a humiliating moment in college when reading a daughter's paper. The more a writer writes, the more choice and rehearsal increase and occur at unpredictable moments. Facts restlessly push their way to the surface until the writer says, "I'll write about that."

A number of years ago some friends and I were swapping yarns about great teachers we had known who had little formal education. I told some anecdotes about my Great Uncle, Horatio Nelson Wilbur, a dry New England wit, filled with salty wisdom. The roll of the stories on my tongue and the reactions of my friends to his humor gave rise to the words, "I really ought to write something about him." For two years I made notes, talked with other relatives, until I finally put words to paper. In contrast, six year old Mary goes to her writing center, picks up a piece of paper and murmurs, "Let's see, what'll I write about? I know . . . a wedding." She mumbles again, "The wedding, the beautiful wedding," and reaches for a crayon to draw a bride with veil, tiara and flowing gown at the top of her twelve by eighteen inch paper.

## REHEARSAL:

Conscious rehearsal accompanies the decision to write. Rehearsal refers to preparation for composing. Rehearsal can take the form of daydreaming, sketching, doodling, making lists of words, outlining, reading, conversing, or even writing lines as a foil to further rehearsal. The writer ponders, "What shall I include? What's a good way to start? Should it be a poem, debate, first person narrative, or short story?"

Rehearsal may also take the form of ego cheering, "This will be magnificent. Surely it will be published. My girl will think I am super. I'll work every day on this. The kids will laugh."

### Mary:

Mary rehearses for writing by drawing. As she draws she recreates visually the impressions that were there at the wedding: colors, dresses, hair styles, the actual persons in the wedding party. She adds jewelry on top of the costumes. "This is what I'm going to have when I get married," she announces to Jennifer writing at the desk next to her, "lots of gold and diamonds." If Mary is asked before she draws what she will write about her response is general, "I don't know, something about a wedding." If asked the same question farther along in the drawing, her response is more detailed.

### John:

John is nine and wants to write about racing cars. Last night he and his father tracked their favorite cars and drivers at the raceway. John could still feel the vibration of the engines as they roared into the curve where he was sitting. Dust, popcorn, the bright lights overhead, the smell of exhaust and gasoline were all part of his unconscious memory. John was so sure of their reality he thought he merely had to pick up a pencil and the words would pour forth. John didn't rehearse, paused a moment, and with mouth slightly moving wrote:

The cars was going fast.

He reread the words. "Agggh," he bellowed. "This is stupid." No images came to mind from his simple sentence. There were no details to build on. John's reading abilities were strong enough to let him know the sentence said little. He didn't know what to do with his words. John thinks, reads, but doesn't go on. He can't . . . alone. He has not yet written regularly enough to learn how to retrieve images and information from previous events.

Don:

Uncle Nelson had been dead for fifteen years. I had missed him, his sense of humor, slant on life. The laughter of the teachers as I shared one anecdote after another made me miss him more. I didn't write then but I quickly made a list of every incident and anecdote I could recall from our relationship and stories others told about him. My rehearsal has grown now for the last two years into long lists, even some early writing of one incident which I wrote last year. There was a gap of one year between the time I first told about Uncle Nelson, made the lists, and began some quick sketching.

Choice and Rehearsal:

Mary, John and I were hardly aware of making a choice about a writing topic. Topics pushed their way to the surface until the writer said, "I'll write about that." For writers who compose daily, other topics come to them in the midst of writing about another subject, especially if they know they can exercise control over their choices. It is not unusual to hear children speculate about topics they will choose from the list of future topics already listed in their writing folders. The very act of writing itself through heightened meanings and perceptions prepares us both consciously and unconsciously to see more possibilities for writing subjects. Writing that occurs but once every two weeks limits choice because it limits both the practice of writing and the exercise of topic selection. Rehearsal does not occur since the writer usually didn't know he would have been writing that day. Under these circumstances teachers have to come up with topics for the children, ruling out both choice and rehearsal.

COMPOSING:

Composing refers to everything a writer does from the time first words are put on paper until all drafts are completed. Sometimes when a writer must rehearse through writing, there is overlap between the two, composing and rehearsing.

Don:

About a year after telling my "Uncle Nelson" stories I began to compose. Where to start? I decided to show my Uncle. Two images dominated my thought, one of my Uncle standing in the stern of a skiff, sculling his way into a brisk southwest wind, the other, catching him out of the corner of my eye. That's just the way the image entered my thinking, off to the side, creeping in from the left as I walked head down, picking my way through pools and rocks at low tide. I tried some lines:

> At the cry of a gull I looked up and was more attracted by a brown blur bobbing off to my left and not quite behind me. It was the familiar brown felt hat of my Uncle Horatio Nelson Wilbur.

I liked the idea of bringing my Uncle into focus from a blur on my left. But the image just didn't fit with how I felt about my Uncle. I wanted a clear, distinct profile. It may be that my work in photography was bothered by the clutter of the beach, the rocks and seaweed. I decided to work with another image. I wrote again:

> The brown felt hat was his hallmark. You'd start at that hat a quarter of a mile out to sea, catch a trail of cigar smoke from underneath, and check his casual lean into the wind as his long arm commanded the scull oar in the stern. Casually sure. That was Uncle Nelson.

That felt better. A profile with some quick sketches to show the person, with just a hint of the teacher, was what I wanted. More work was needed but at least I had my foot in the door.

I didn't publish my first piece of writing until seven years ago when I was forty-three. Since that time I have tried to write daily, biting my fingernails when I miss a day because it is so hard to pick up a cold trail on an article. Gradually I have come to trust that if I stay at the writing something will come of it. Time is my greatest ally. I try to listen to the information, finding which way it will lead me, but ultimately backing off because I am surprised when there is more than I can report. I haven't yet gotten over my years on academic probation in college when I heard time after time, "Graves, you just don't have enough information. Did you forget again?" Now I'm supposed to throw off that heritage and exclude information.

Then there are days when nothing works. I write a line. It doesn't fit. I try another line. A dead end. I clean my study, make phone calls, eat, return and write some more. I don't know what I'm doing, but the fingers still work on the keys. I wonder when the great breakthrough will come. Will it be just around the corner as it was on Monday, or a month from now as it was last spring? I come to the typewriter every day; some days knowing the writing will go well, other days playing the keyboard as a lottery, never missing a day, but always hoping.

Mary:

Mary finished her drawing, paused, glanced at the wedding party in stick figures and costumes, and spoke softly to herself, "When." She scrawled "Wn" on the line below the drawing, spoke "when" again to confirm what she had done and to establish where she was in the writing, and added "we." "Wn we . . ." As Mary writes she feels the words with her tongue, confirming what the tongue knows with her ear, eye and hand. Ever since she was an infant, eye and hand have been working together with the mouth, confirming even further what they didn't know.

Mary composes so slowly that she must return each time to the beginning of her sentence and reread up to the current word under formulation. Each new word is such a struggle that the overall syntax is obliterated. The present is added to a shaky, indistinct past. The future hardly exists. Beyond one or two words after the word under formulation, Mary cannot share what will happen in her story of the wedding.

Mary may borrow from internal imagery of the wedding event when she writes. But she frequently uses her drawing as an idea bank. Mary does not appear to wrestle with word choice. Rather, she wrestles with the mechanics of formation, the spelling and handwriting, then with her reading. She wants the spelling to be stable enough so that when she tries to share it later with her teacher she will be able to read it.

After writing the one sentence, "Wn we wt to the wdg we hd fn," (When we went to the wedding we had fun.) Mary's composing of her writing has ended. In Mary's estimation the drawing is still the more important part of the paper. This is not surprising since her drawing contains far more information than the writing. Other children will also respond more to her drawing than her writing. For Mary the writing adds to the drawing, not the drawing to the writing.

John:

John impatiently taps the eraser part of his pencil on the desk and glares at his paper, empty save for the one line, "The cars was going fast."

"What's the matter, John?" inquires his teacher, Mr. Govoni.

"I can't write. I don't know what to do. All I have is this."

"Turn your paper over for a minute, John. Now tell me, how did you happen to write about cars?"

"Well, you see last night, me and my Dad we went to the Raceway out on Routh 125. We go there every Saturday night and you should see those guys drive. Charley Jones is the hottest thing right now. You should see him sneak up on a guy, fake to the outside, and just when a guy looks in the mirror at the fake, Charley takes 'em on the inside.

Nothin' but dust for the other guy to look at. Charley makes top money."

"Slow down a minute, John. You've said enough already. You know a lot about Charley Jones. Put it down right here and I'll be back in five minutes to see how you are doing."

John begins to write: "Charley Jones makes a lotta money. He's the best driver around. He has won two weeks in a row. Me and my Dad we saw him drive and he's our favrit." John rushes the words to the paper, hardly pausing between sentences. A look of satisfaction is on his face. Triumph . . . at least Charley Jones is in print. John doesn't give the details about Charley passing the other driver. Even though this is good information, John picks up on his last statement. For John, the oral has been the needed rehearsal, a means of hearing his voice and intention. He orally selects, composes, and with a quick reading, notes that the writing is satisfying since he has included Charley Jones in his draft.

COMPOSING PATTERNS:

All writers follow a simple pattern: select, compose, read, select, compose, read . . . Both Mary and I had to select one bit of information from a mass of information to start writing. I first selected the image of my Uncle standing in the stern of his skiff from a mass of memories about him. I converted the choice to words, reducing the full image of him to a quick sketch. I knew I had to write through several starts before I could see in the writing what would be the best selection. Until I could see the words about my Uncle on the page, had something to read, I couldn't come up with the appropriate line for me.

I don't have to worry about handwriting and spelling during the composing. I type, read, concentrate totally on the message that emerges on the typewriter before me. I see the sentence that emerges in relation to the total image I want to create for my Uncle in this first scene of of him at sea. The last words in the vignette, casually sure, released a whole series of new incidents and images that needed to be organized or sequenced into the opening lines:

> The brown felt hat was his hallmark. You'd start at that hat a quarter of a mile out to sea, catch a trail of cigar smoke from underneath the brim, note the casual lean into the wind as his long arm commanded the scull oar in the stern. Casually sure . . . that was Uncle Nelson.

Two incidents, one with me, another with some neighbors, would illustrate just how casually sure he was when he taught his lessons. Each trial, first the one on the beach, the other with my Uncle at sea, had its own select, compose, read cycle. But the daily work on the typewriter has made this cycle automatic for a large portion of the time. There are instances, however, when the choice of the right word can take as long as five to ten minutes, even be abandoned for another day.

Mary:

Mary uses the same cycle in her writing. She selects information but from her drawing, chooses words to go with her selection (voicing them as she goes), composes (still voicing), reads, selects and composes again. Handwriting, spelling, and reading dominate her conscious process. Letter formation, thinking of what sounds will be right with letters, nearly obliterate her message.

Mary's reading is different than mine. We both read for orientation but Mary reads exclusively to know where one word fits in relation to other words. She rereads from the beginning after every word composed. If she has to struggle with a difficult sound-symbol arrangement in the middle of a word, she may have to reread from the beginning to find anew even what word she is composing. Under these circumstances, revision for Mary means only the adjustment of handwriting, spelling and some grammatical inconsistencies. Mary is not adjusting her information yet.

## VOICE

The process has a driving force called voice. Technically voice is not a process component or a step in the journey from choice-rehearsal to final revision. Rather, it underlies every part of the process. To ignore voice is to present the process as a lifeless, mechanical act. Divorcing voice from process is like leaving salt from stew, love from sex, or sun from gardening. Teachers who attend to voice listen to the person in the piece and observe how they use process components.

Voice is the imprint of ourselves on the writing. It is that part of the self that pushes the writing ahead, the dynamo in the process. Take the voice away and the writing collapses of its own weight. There is no writing, just words following words. Voiceless writing is written to whom it may concern. The voice shows how I choose information, organize it, select the words, all in relation to what I want to say and how I want to say it. The reader says, "Someone is here. I know that person. I've been there, too." But the writer's voice is in the right register, not pointing to the self but to the material. The voice is the frame of the window through which the information is seen. Readers can't read voiceless writing when no one is there, any more than they can have dialogue with a mannequin.

Listen to a friend speak from another room; quickly you say, "That's Norman." Norman has his way of speaking. Experts can take voice imprints from an oscilloscope and say, "That was Louise speaking on the telephone." The same is true in handwriting, any expressive event . . . the voice is there. Experts argue over the authenticity of a painting. But they argue over technique, arrangement, subject, all as imprints of the voice. "This is the way Vermeer expresses himself. He'd never do it that way." Vermeer discloses himself, as does every artist in every craft, or it isn't craft.

Voice has a good start with six year old children and goes from complication to complication after that, until late in the game the writer becomes proficient enough to make writing sound like speech. Voice could come earlier in children's writing if we'd only help them discover subjects of their own and then maintain their voices in them.

Mary writes in simple, straight-forward fashion using voice to accompany her writing. Her speech supplies many of the missing voice elements as she writes. The unselfconscious Mary lets the words fall where they may. Her drawing also contains many voice elements, many expressions of herself, her feelings, opinions and ideas. The writing certainly doesn't sound like speech, yet Mary's person is everywhere.

From that first experience with writing, Mary will spend the rest of her life finding her voice, losing it, and finding it again. Much of the success of this journey depends on her teachers. Every new experience, subject, writing tool, stage of living from childhood through adolescence, and on through stages of adult life requires new voices to fit the changing person. We speak of the sound, the voice of writers, the early Hemingway, the late Hemingway. They aren't the same person with the same voice. Voices may be similar but they are not identical.

John doesn't know how to retrieve information, find himself in relation to his subject. His skill in reading has rubbed out his oral voice, once so dominant in his writing. He has to discover the oral routes again, just as he had it in first grade. We often hear children say, "I used to be able to write good in second grade, but now I can't write at all in the fourth grade."

Our data show that when a writer makes a good choice of subject, the voice booms through. When the voice is strong, writing improves and all the skills that go to improve writing . . . often without any formal teaching in the tools. When the person is in the piece, the dynamo hums, energy for writing goes up, the child enjoys the writing. Teachers could never assign what children choose to do when they find their own voices.

Voice breathes through the entire process: rehearsal, topic choice, selection, composing, reading, rewriting. Not only is it the dynamo to the writing, but it contributes most to the development of the writer. It pushes the writer into problems through interesting topics, gives energy to persist in their solution, then carries the writer on to a new set of issues. As the writer moves through this growth cycle there are principles of development that must be understood as well. These must be put into practice along with the understanding of the writing process. Professionals who understand both areas, process and development, possess two essentials for the craft of teaching writing.

# Chapter III

## How Do Writers Develop?

John was stuck. The line on the page didn't measure up to his image of the race track. He felt confident and in control of his writing until he read his first line, "The cars was going fast." Disillusionment set in. "Used to be able to write . . . can't any more . . . don't know what to do. I hate writing," muttered John. The situation was out of balance. John could see a problem but no solution looming on the distant shore. He was utterly fogbound.

John has a problem but is in a good classroom. His teacher, Mr. Govoni, helps him to catch his balance again when he asks John to tell him more about the evening at the racetrack. John tells about the evening, regains control, and continues to write.

The racetrack predicament is a microcosm of what constitutes growth in writing or any other learning event. The learner perceives a gap, a problem to solve, and goes about trying to solve it. The problem is sometimes accompanied by tension, disillusionment - at least a halting to activity. In other instances the child isn't even aware the problem is being solved since the situation is only a quarter of a step away from what the child has been solving all along. Nevertheless, losing balance, regaining it, and going on, is the substance of learning.

Teachers need to know the nature of problems solved by children, how important they are for growth, and what to do about them in the classroom. A child with a problem is not a moment for panic, but a moment for teaching.

But the teaching is centered in helping the child to solve the problem for himself. Otherwise, the child will see the teacher as the one in control of the writing process, and not himself.

This chapter is about how children develop as writers. New ways of looking at children's problem solving are shown in what children do and say in the writing process. Finally, an outline of the general orders of child focus in the writing process is presented. In this way the issues of child control in the writing process can be generally predicted.

Mary

John is highly conscious of an imbalance and loss of control because the issue at hand is related to voice, the reason for writing about the raceway. Not all imbalances are of John's magnitude. For example, Mary deals with such a slight imbalance she wouldn't even be aware of her solving process.

Mary is composing the word, liked. Mary begins by quickly writing "l." She then moves into sound trials, repeating the whole word while listening to dominant features in her own voice. She next picks up the position of her tongue in the front of her mouth, hears and feels "t," for "ed" and writes "t" on the paper. The paper now has "lt" written on it. Next Mary acts on the interior of the word. She senses something is missing; there is an imbalance between what is on the paper and what she feels between tongue, eye and ear. She writes the vowel "a" between "l" and "t", lat. Mary didn't hear an "a," she just felt some letter other than a consonant belonged there.

Persons sitting next to Mary would probably be unaware of this subtle step of growth. Thousands of episodes like Mary's are repeated every hour in rooms where children are free to control their writing. Such episodes are prelude to solving larger imbalances leading to even more substantial growth in children.

**Don**

I felt uneasy. I had written a fair amount about my Uncle Nelson but there was a feeling that something wasn't right. At 2:00 p.m. I took a walk, as I usually did after lunch. The walk followed the familiar road to the Gullane beach, then along the dunes to a large cove overlooked by a tumbled cottage, the turning point in my daily walks. Each day I take a walk to test various options in my writing or to get release from morning writing itself.

On this day I decided to think through my uneasiness. Uneasiness was something I'd come to trust. If the uneasiness lasted for several weeks, there usually was something wrong. What bothered me was my own intrusion in the writing about my Uncle. I needed to be in the piece, yet not obliterate my Uncle. I wanted to show how much he had affected me and used several leads through myself to him. The result . . . and this struck me about the time I reached the turning point at the stone cottage . . . there was so much lead-in through me that Uncle Nelson had taken a back seat. I was writing the piece to show how he taught me over the years. But four pages into the article my Uncle hadn't even appeared, least of all taught me anything.

I felt a mixture of bitterness and self-pity. I'd wasted all that time perfecting a lead that took me down to the shore to look for Uncle Nelson, running across the fields (he'd once said that I could run faster than anyone at the Point), searching through the boat house and the tide pools on the shore. I'd have to make a decision about what kind of balance was going to be in the chapter . . . and surely it would include less of me, but how?

After seven years of writing, why hadn't I imporved? Why did I have to waste days, weeks, of writing on some wrong track before I knew what I was about. The last article I had written about a NEW LOOK AT WRITING RESEARCH, took me four months of writing before I arrived at the one simple thing the whole article was about, research in context.

About the time I hit the rise from the dunes to the road home I hit on a solution. For some reason, solutions come at the point when I have first been a bit upset, forgotten the upset - in a sense said, "to hell with it," or, on reckless days, even, "I'll never write again." The solution was what I suspected - show my Uncle Nelson from the start and put him in control. Show him teaching right away. By the time I reached the house I couldn't wait to get to the typewriter. At least I was back on track.

## Reflection

Growth comes when problems are solved for child or adult. Sometimes the person is unaware of the problem solving process; the discrepancy or uneasiness is slight. The solution is almost automatic. On the other hand, there are times when the force of writing, the desperate wanting to write something significant, is very strong and the pain of imbalance, the unsolved problem, is even greater. It can often be a time of disillusionment with self, even with the persons around them. The writer will often say, "I am beyond help. No one can get me out of this predicament." The solution and control must reside with the writer, but outsiders, as in the case of Mr. Govoni, can help the writer to frame the problem, come in touch with original intentions which have been obliterated in disillusionment, and get on with the solution.

Child growth in writing is not happenstance. Teachers can expect certain imbalances to appear at different stages in a writer's life because of what children are prepared to see in their writing. Our research into children's statements and concepts about writing help us to understand the orders in child problem solving in the writing process.

## Children's Concepts of Writing

Teachers need to understand how children become conscious of what they are doing. The edge of consciousness is the teaching edge for the craftsperson. It is the point where children are most aware of what they need to solve on the way to satisfying their intentions in writing. It is the point at which teachers can use their time most effectively. When a child has partial understanding of what he is doing, is frustrated because he can't get where he wants to go, then he is ready for a teacher's help.

Consciousness grows in two directions, from words to acts, and acts to words. In this example of Mary - from acts to words. Mary struggles with handwriting and spelling; when asked what good writers need to do well, replies, "Well, they got to spell good, write on the lines and be neat." Mary mentions this because it is the nature of her conscious struggle with writing and the main focus of her teacher's help. When Mary writes, she changes words, adjusts information in her drawing, may even include her teacher as an audience. But these are unconscious activities, not active enough to become part of her consciousness. Writers of any age do far more than they can explain, simply because consciousness consistently lags behind performance. For this reason, interviews, tests and other interventions never fully get at what learners can do in writing or any other learning area. Tests only skim off what is at the conscious level of the learner.

John

John uses information without knowing it, hears the word used by Mr. Govoni, then tries to use it himself. In this instance, acts go to words and words to acts. Note the process uses by Mr. Govoni:

"John, I see in this new draft you have much more information. I can see that driver looking frantically in the rearview mirror to see where Charley Jones is, then 'poof,' Charley leaves him in the dust." Later, in reference to another selection, John states to Mr. Govoni, "It is good because it has a lot of information in it."

"Can you tell me what you mean by information, John?"

"Well, it has a lot of pages in it." John still associates information with quantity. This is useful for the teacher to know. As Mr. Govoni continually points out the details in John's writing, and asks questions that lead John to add information, John becomes aware of the meaning of information through the choices he makes in what to include in his writing. John's early, imperfect use fo the word, information, is a word looking for definition within the writing process. John, like any other writer, will spend the rest of his life searching for the full meaning of the limitless bounds of the word, information.

Still, the early use of such words lead to greater distance on John's understanding of the process. John's use of the word, information, in conference is the best assurance that the word will be part of John's consciousness when he actually says on his own, "Oh, this part doesn't have enough information, got to put some details in to show what I mean." John's concept of information has gone full cycle: using information unawares, use of word without meaning, beginning understanding of the word, growth of concept through consistent use in conference, to use of the word on his own with intent to revise. Thus, we see how a single word leads to the child's independent use of the word to control the writing process. Concepts, however elemental, are constantly evolving through problem solving and practice. Teachers who know the nature of concept acquisition, as well as the general order of concepts to be acquired, can help children to control their writing.

Don

I follow the same sequence as the children in acquiring concepts, in using them to solve problems in my writing. I try new directions unawares and put in new ways of showing my Uncle. Months later it might dawn on me, "Oh, that's what I was doing! That's the way I solved that one.

My conscious edge, the solving of problems in writing is greatly helped by the writing community in which I live. We spend hours over lunch, in evening meetings, on the telephone talking about how we write, new rituals that work, new pens that edit. Writing sessions are reviewed like the weekend sports spectacular on a Monday. What works, what doesn't work, how did you get out of that bind? Imbalances, despairs, disillusionment, are all part of the writer's edge. They never end.

## General Orders of Problems in Children's Development

Children keep changing the problems they solve, as well as their consciousness of what they do when they write. Most beginners, like Mary, cite spelling as the center issue. Ask a child at this time what good writers need to do well and they reply, "Spell good . . . take your time when you write." This is because so much of their problem solving is simply at the spelling level. Until the word is spelled completely, neither the child, nor friends and teachers will be able to understand the message. Next the child focuses more on aesthetics and form - "What is the best way to put it down, be neat," - the child is moving toward a new type of convention. Some children are able to put the mechanical imbalances and discrepancies behind them and get on to information and topic focus. For others, the battle over mechanics is life long. Because of the limited focus of the school, child, or parents, issues in controlling the craft never come up.

Depending on the focus of the teacher, the spelling, aesthetics and handwriting issues are usually in the first two grades. Toward the end of the first grade, if the child has response from other writers, and help from teachers, conventions become more important. The child is now stymied because he doesn't know what capitals, or punctuation to put in or where to put them. The group also helps him to become more conscious of "the right way" to write. Ask this child what good writing is and he will reply, "Getting it right." Orthodoxy is now more dominant in the craft.

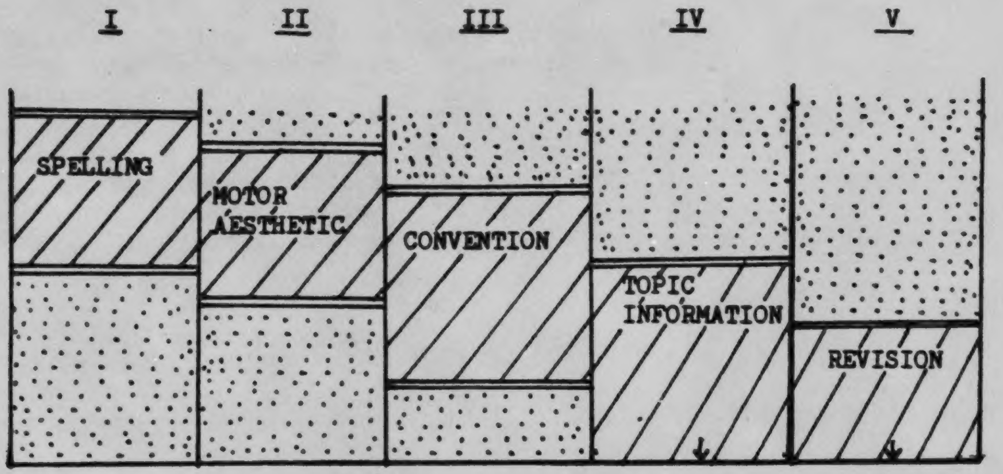
When the child has put the motor-aesthetic issues, as well as the conventions behind him, more attention is given to the topic and information. The child's focus depends on the teacher. In rooms where children are continually asked questions about their information by the teacher and their peers, they start to use information as a criteria for imbalances in their writing. "There isn't anything here. This is stupid," - referring to the content of the piece. Or, "I should have chosen a different topic." Children in this stage say, "Good writers should know a lot about their subject. The pieces should have a lot of information in them."

Finally, from the initial concern for good topic and information, children struggle with issues of adding and taking out information. They are interested in such imbalances as problems of better organization, or more active language in relation to their intention. Children in this stage struggle with drafts, refinements and compose over many days or weeks.

Figure Two shows more clearly the relationship and order to the different problem solving emphases for children and the imbalances that are more likely to be at the forefront of their problem solving.

Diagonal lines indicate the points at which children cite the category as being important in their writing.

FIGURE 2



The data show that these are the general orders in which children's practice and concept about what is important to them emerge. Some principles need to be used to interpret Figure Two since there are myriad exception to the above model.

1. For some learners, spelling and hadnwriting issues last a lifetime. For others such imbalances may be behind them by the time they are seven years of age.

2. What teachers emphasize in class become the centers of child imbalance. If teachers never get beyond spelling, aesthetics or conventions in their attention, then the child will not learn to take ownership of the selection, the best means to solving issues in the first three tracks. ( I to III)

3. Teachers who emphasize information without giving help in the first three columns prevent many children from being released for a fuller attention to information.

4. From a practice standpoint, all children function in all five categories the day they start to write.

5. All five categories are present in the life of any writer, six year old or professional. To some degree each of the categories can grow in practice and concept over a lifetime.

6. Each category raises new issues of growth for the next. This is why children cite these in this order. The ideal is for conventions to be put behind the writer in order to focus on information and one's own intentions exclusively.

## Final Summation

Children grow as writers because they wrestle with imbalances between their intentions and the problems at hand. This is what growth is all about, being stretched, but not to the point where the problem encountered makes no sense at all. Writers are not aware of most of their problem solving since they relate so closely to what they already can do.

There are general orders to the types of problems on which children must focus. Once general categories fall into the automatic or generally "solved" condition, new problems arise for the writer's attention. For example, new problems in information raise issues about how the information will be integrated into the existing text. Thus, problems of revision now become the focal point.

Such patterns in problem solving and development do not, however, lead to "packages" of attack where children first master spelling, then handwriting, conventions etc. before writing. These schemes are aided most when the child has help with his information. The child who takes control of information will soon take control of mechanical conventions.

Children's intentions have an ego-force behind them that both aid and hamper the problem solving process in writing. To "round out" an understanding of the growth process these issues are examined in Chapter IV.

# Chapter IV

## On Buying Glasses For A Wolf

When children first write they focus on themselves. This is as it should be. The child will make no greater progress in his entire school career than in the first year of school, simply because self-centeredness makes him fearless. The world must bend to his will. This child screens out audience. He is fascinated with his own marks on paper. When else in life will a human struggle with the composing of an eight letter word for as long as ten minutes?

Children have a strong, forward force to their writing, borne of self-centered confidence. Such self-centeredness, or egocentrism as it is often called, does not mean "selfish." Rather, it means that the child centers on a very narrow band of thinking, and ignores other problems in the field. For example, a child may focus so much on getting the message down through spelling and motor activity that there is less focus on information. It is enough to get the message down. Only so much can be taken in at one time.

Still, children need to broaden their range of problem solving, see themselves as successful problem solvers. They do this through decentering. A child encounters a problem, backs off, surveys the situation, entertains options, and proceeds with a plan. Decentering is the act of backing off, getting off the center of the problem and seeing it in its broadest terms.

**Mary**

Mary is asked to read over four of her papers written in the last four weeks in order to choose the one she thinks is best. Mary quickly points to the one about her golden retriever dog, Taffy. She is asked why this is her best paper. "Well," she informs the teacher, "I love Taffy. I hug her after school, and I kiss her too." She is asked why this paper is better than the other three. "This one is about witches, then Sesame Street and my goldfish, but none of them is nice to me like Taffy."

Mary's judgement of quality is centered in her subject, in this case, her love for Taffy. Before she used subject as criteria for best papers, it was neatness. In each case, her centering has changed, yet her voice, the power behind her choice, governs the decision. The criteria for decisions, though expanding, is still narrow. Soon Mary's criteria for best papers will focus on action and feelings in her writing. This comes because she is also solving problems of audience, reading skills, and myriads of others in her daily writing. These problem solving acts broaden her vision and provide for an expended perspective shen decentering occurs.

**Don**

I want to show the effect of Uncle Nelson on my life. It would seem that the best approach is to show my Uncle through myself, to describe at length my reactions to him. I describe my return from college, my anxiety about "measuring up" to his expectations, racing to the shore to see him. I don't trust the reader to make his own judgment. For the longest time, Uncle Nelson didn't appear - even to the fourth page. I simply couldn't decenter off my own need to be present. The story about my Uncle as teacher is reflected only in the title - nothing more.

I went through revision after revision of a lead that started with me getting out of the car, showing detail of revisiting my childhood haunts. I even found information about returning home that was new to me. The writing sped on but where was Uncle Nelson? I decentered when I tried to forget the problem at the conscious level. Nevertheless, the problem continued to work and on my walk home the solution became more clear.

It is too easy to label egocentricity as a negative force. The lack of decentering, moving off the self, can be a problem if it persists too long. If Mary didn't change her criteria of best paper by the age of twelve or I was forever blind to my way of distorting characters, then voice would be an unchecked force. Mary and I enjoy our subjects and still grow even in the midst of our centeredness.

## Centering

It would seem that if decentering is good in problem solving, centering must be bad. Not so. People center for a reason and these reasons must be explored.

Repetition, a centering of its own kind, is important for growth. It can be a kind of marking time and can fulfill many needs of the learner-writer. Before children come to school they will request the same bedtime story over and over again. Chris, seven years old, writes nothing but stories about wars in outer space. He is now on his tenth episode, episdoes that have accumlated over the last four weeks. A quick glance tells me there is little difference between the first and the last episode. They all fall into a familiar pattern. Six year old John says, "Look, I start every line on every page just the same." And he does. Like someone learning a foreign language each sentence begins with "This is . . ." John has finally learned how to spell "This is," and he uses it for everything. "This is a boat. This is where we go fishing. This is the fish we caught. This is us eating it." Just as a child uses pivot words to build new sentences in acquiring speech, children use this centered repetition to build sentences in writing.

Writers of all ages have only so much they can focus on at a time. Show me a writer who concentrates equally on handwriting, spelling, topic, language, organization and information in equal doses and I will show you a confused writer. General, even specific centering, such as the same topic or use of the same words, can become holding patterns for other kinds of growth.

The following are further examples of why writers center:

TOPIC: The child is known as the expert on "space" - doesn't want to lose his class position, by moving to another topic.

A limited spelling vocabulary can handle only this topic.

The child can draw about this topic but doesn't believe he can draw others.

The child simply enjoys the doing, like playing in blocks or the sandbox.

The writer really doesn't believe he has other worthwhile experiences for subjects. The writer tends to deny what he knows, or it has been denied for him in other years and in other subjects.

Children may branch out to new topics, but in painful instances return to the same old reliable story, like Linus returns to his blanket in times of stress.

PROCESS: Pages or booklets are filled regardless of story content. The child is centered on finishing. Finishing means the paper is long and all blank space filled.

Centered in drawing - Enjoying it and fearing the process of putting words on paper.

Centered in not finishing - Afriad of audience. In transition. Doesn't know where to put new information.

Centered in revision - Continues to change original reason for writing.

LANGUAGE: Centered in interjections - Wants to have sound and excitement on the page.

Centered in adjectives - Enjoys the "flowery-sweet" sounds of things.

Writers are centered because they can't focus on other things at the moment, because they are fragile learners, or they enjoy the taste of this newly centered diet. In short, there are always reasons for centering, and teachers need to figure where one is beneficial, another needing assistance.

## The Process of Decentering

There can be no decentering without first seeing a problem, an imbalance. The writer pulls off center because he wants another look. Decentering implies a moving off from center but also knowing where to stand, where to look. I place myself high on a bluff, far enough back to see the problem at a distance. I increase the dimensions of space and time to deal with the problem. I return to my original intention for writing about my uncle or reread my material from the point of view of the editor.

But I can decenter and not see. Pressed by a deadline, or my own impatience to be through, answers are not heard. I may not even want them. Answers mean more work. Or, biases cannot be transcended. I have been with the piece for weeks, explored so many options to get out of the wilderness that every word sounds like every other word.

Now the problem and possible solution are seen. I come up with a new hypothesis. I move into a trial phase. The approach works or it doesn't. If it works I continue on, buoyed with new ego strength. If it doesn't work I may be disillusioned and continue to try the same approach again and again, hoping that repetition will see me through. The virtue of "work" now transcends all reasonable decentering in importance. At least others will say I take my work seriously. Look at all I have done, the hours and hours I have labored. My color is poor, circles are under the eyes; a touch of flu would make the situation more virtuous.

Not unlike my forgetting the problem with my Uncle Nelson piece is another kind of decentering. Delay the solution, continue to work for a time, hoping the answer will come with new context on the problem "back there" in the text. Depending on the size and scope of the problem, decide that at the end of the paragraph, the page, or chapter, the issue "back there" will be reviewed again.

## Decentering and the Seasons of Life

Decentering can be thought of in broader contexts than the solution of a problem on the page. There are times in our lives when it is difficult to have distance on ourselves and the problems at hand. Growth from many sources forces us to take on a new understanding of our own person. Often the fledgling person is floored by the new territory, or the growth pains that go with it. Six year olds becoming seven, young adolescents, different stages of adult development all have their seasons when it is difficult to get off the self and see many problems at hand. Six year old Sarah is an example.

Sarah writes about two and one-half six to eight page booklets (one sentence to the page) a day. She has no difficulty in choosing topics; they pour from her pencil. Many of her stories have a loosely constructed logic and time scheme. The other children ask her what she means. Sarah's smile implies, "They mean what I want them to mean." But the other children persist with their questions, "What does this mean? What is this about?" Gradually, Sarah realizes that they may have a point. She reads her own pieces differently. She experiences a loss of innocence - "Not everyone feels as I do about my writing." Sarah retreats, ceases to write, and only returns to the task months later when she has some perspective on writing. Sarah's experience can be a shock for any writer.

Audience is not the only issue in the young writer's life. Writers of all ages struggle with the polar opposites throughout their lives but particularly at the focus points of growth: true - not true, right - wrong, never - always, one way - several ways, day - night, their way - my way. The stretching of internal growth brings in new information that fog what used to be clear. Language shows the change. Absolute adverbs change to: sometimes, frequently, whenever. The learner will say, "I used to be able to do this, but I just can't decide what's the best way." He is paralyzed by options that can't yet be sorted out. Six and eleven year olds write fluently one month, then become paralyzed by the first taste of operational and adolescent thinking.

Growth slows down in the initial phases of these new periods of vision. There is much for the learner to sort out. Options produce temporary paralyses and new orthodoxies. Seven year olds want conventions, rules to abide by. Their topics are chosen more carefully. Before, they had no trouble with topic choice; now they wonder what to choose. There is greater interest in punctuation, the right spelling, the right way for the paper to appear. This is on the first day. The next day the person may be experimenting with the new stage and deny all orthodoxy - a roller-coaster experience for both writer and teacher. Justice in the classroom runs from students wanting full prosecution of offenders to complete permissiveness. Such a roller-coaster existence makes it difficult for these learners to be consistent in what they see in problems: one day clarity, the next day confusion. One day their choice of a topic will win a Nobel prize, the next day the paper is thrown in the basket.

## Final Reflection

Children's voices push them ahead. The voice is centered in a vision, has an image of the mountain top, the piece completed in victory. Sometimes the centering is right from the start. The child has rehearsed the topic long enough, or the experience is so rich that the voice can take information off the top and be right the first time. But it is hard to be completely on course the first time. A wrong compass bearing may seem right the first quarter mile from shore but in five miles the deviation from main course becomes extreme. Early drafts can seem on target but as the writer gets farther from shore, the wrongness of the trajectory is unmistakable. The writer stops, decenters, looks the problem over, changes course, with the voice-ego still pushing him on.

Schools forget the source of power in children's writing. Egos are cut down, voices removed from the writing, the person from the print, until there is no driving force left in the selection. We then hear the familiar questions, "How can we motivate them into writing? How can we get them to write?"

The unchecked voice-ego, however, can be a hungry undiscriminating wolf. It has a ravenous appetite for praise from self and others. So much so that the writer is blind to personal biases about content and quality. The trick for writer and teacher is to keep the wolf-voice fed while still asking the tough decentering questions. The writer then sees the problem afresh in light of living up to internal demands of excellence and the original reason for writing in the first place. Thus, the wolf is fed and the writer still maintains control while improving the piece.

The challenge to teachers is to know the process of writing, to understand the self-centered force behind the writer, and to see the place of this centeredness in the overall development of the writer. When the teacher understands this, the craft of teaching is practiced. For just as choice is the essense of art in writing, it is the substance of the craft of teaching. Like the one deft movement of the surgeon's scalpel, unnoticed by patient and observers, the teacher asks the one relevant question. The writer hardly notices the teacher or the question since the attention is so precisely focused on the person and the piece. Thus, the control remains with the writer who has new energy for the problem at hand.

One important tool remains for teachers to help children maintain control of the writing process. Teachers need a broader, as well as a more specific, framework in which to view children's problem solving. The study of TIME AND SPACE as a way of looking at child growth and progress adds a new tool to the teacher's view of children's growing control of the writing process.

# CHAPTER V

## MAKING DEVELOPMENT VISIBLE

The two crafts, teaching and writing, demand new ways of looking at children's changes as writers. Teachers need immediate information that will help them aid children in the midst of the writing process, not when the paper is completed. Wholistic scoring, nationally normed tests, system-wide examinations are important ways of assessing, but none of these helps us to know what to do tomorrow morning when the child is writing.

The single most important way of noting child change in our research on the writing process is the child's growth in the dimensions of space and time. The concept of space and time is often used to explain the relationship of all things in the physical universe. If something changes, then the change can be described as movement within the dimensions of space and time.

Space cannot be understood without time. Space is the container in the form of the universe, world, cup, football field, or measure of music. Time is the marking off of the container into latitude and longitude, volume units, or notes and rests in the measure. I understand those spaces by moving through them or using them. There is the space of Oxfordshire, Victoria, or New York. I understand those areas by moving through them and noting the logical connections of hills and streams, villages and cities, rolling fields to mountains and lakes. All of these examples are visible elements of space and time.

Not all space-time elements are visible. Clock time is but one use of time, and geographical space but one use of space. There is the invisible space-time of the problem or writing subject. Mary decides to write about the subject of her aunt's wedding. There are limits to what Mary knows about the wedding. Since there are limits to the information, it has large or small spatial qualities. If all of Mary's information could be typed into a computer, it would occupy a certain amount of space. The wedding information has certain logical bondings (time). Mary's narrative about what she knows makes sense in parts, in others it doesn't. Her information is understood by reading through the logical time units within the subject container. As Mary changes the way she expands information and its relationship within the subject container, we begin to see how Mary changes her use of information. Mary's teacher notes her use of information and appropriately frames her questions.

Teachers who let children teach them about what they know have no difficulty using this framework. Since they increase their contact with the child, and give the child the responsibility for teaching them, they get information on the child's progress at all points of the process. In the space of a single week, they see the child choosing topics, composing, struggling with handwriting, spelling, all of the conventions. They will have discussed the child's plans, responded to early attempts, finished papers or listened to the child speak about his information. Even an elemental understanding of the space-time framework is useful to the teacher who would teach writing as a craft.

Material in this chapter concentrates on an introduction to space and time. Teachers should gain an initial understanding of what is involved in child growth in use of the page, process and information. The rest of the book will be spent in showing how children learn to control each of these important dimensions.

## SPACE-TIME -- THE PAGE

Mary discovers a page by writing on it, by making marks on page after page over a long period of time. Up to her first days in school Mary has been discovering multi-dimensional space: her bedroom, playroom, yard or block. She discovered that space by walking, running, skipping, touching her way through it. Now she discovers a one-dimensional, 12 by 18 inch paper, lined at the bottom for writing with space at the top for drawing.

If left on her own, Mary would discover the page in random fashion, drawing on different parts of the page, making columns of letters or numbers, even a few words. As time goes on she learns the conventions of order by practicing on the space of the paper. She starts in the upper left hand corner of the paper for the writing, learns that drawing goes in the unlined portion at the top. It won't be long before an observer will see Mary making estimating motions with her arm at the drawing section, glances to the bottom of the page estimating the placement of her content. Soon she realizes that messages can be continued from one line to the next, even from one side of the page to the back, or on to another page.

Mary discovers the space of the page with her entire body, not just the movement of the hand. She demonstrates one of the miracles of human activity, the ability to position her body, dismiss a wide range of large muscles, and with hand, mouth and eye working together, make marks in a set space. Observe a young child in those first days of writing and note the repertoire of body movements from feet to the top of the head as the child keeps adjusting the self to the "new" space on the page.

Time on a page is the logical connection of letters to words, to sentences and paragraphs in relation to art work. Each follows the other at predictable intervals from the upper left hand side of the page to the lower right, then on to the next page.

But time cannot be understood without the space container. There have to be limits surrounding the intervals or there can be no logical progression, for the intervals are defined by the limits. Picture the frustration of a child who would discover writing by composing on a twelve foot by five foot piece of paper, or a three by four inch card. Limits cause development to establish poles before moving on. Children (adults, too) recall initial and final portions of a story. Morning and evening establish the contents of the day, children learn words by first establishing initial and final consonant positions.

Containers change too. The growing bodies of information on the inside demand the shedding of the skin on the outside. New information demands a new page, chapter, or subject. Like cells in mitosis, there is a splitting at the poles with a new cell born. Outer space won't tolerate the demand from the inside.

Mary does not end her discovery of the page at the age of six. Toward the end of the first year of school and on through her entire life she continues her discovery of the page. Almost as soon as she has mastered the mechanical elements of writing, new information demands are placed on the existing text. Now Mary is eight and completes a draft about her dog. She discovers she has left out an incident about her dog's tussle with a skunk. She is faced with a new space-time issue - how to insert the material into the existing text. The easiest place to put the new incident would be at the end but it would be out of order. Her teacher helps her to locate the right place in the text, make an asterisk, draw a line to the top of the page and write the missing anecdote.

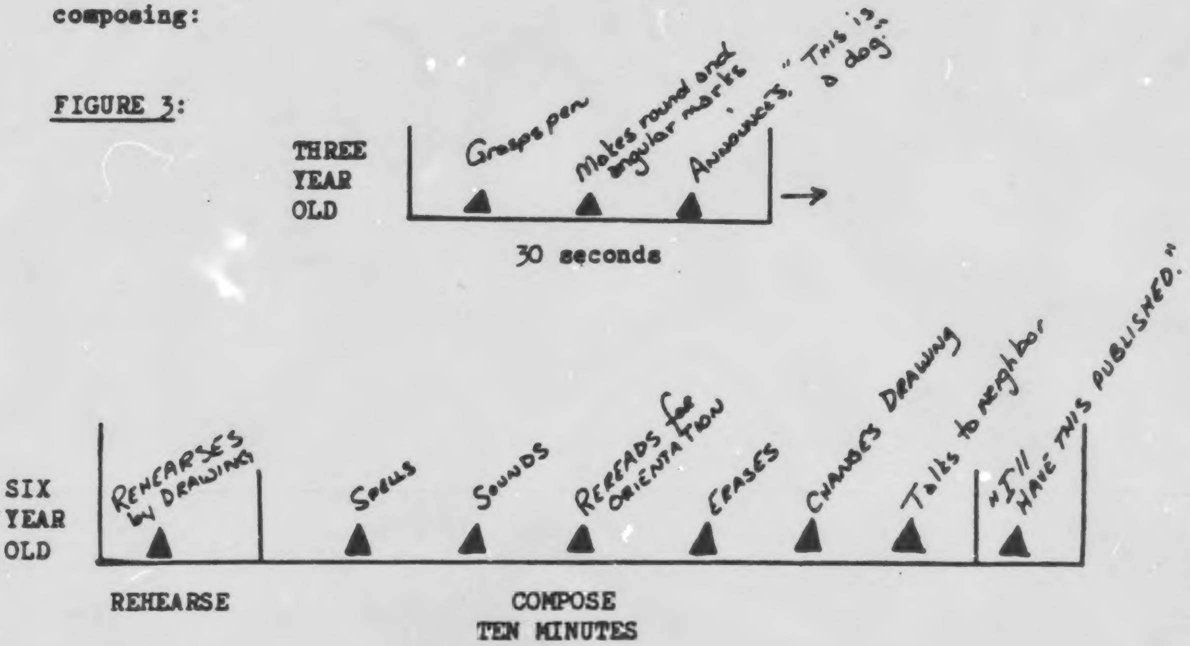
Mary joins writers of the ages who must break the conventions they have so carefully learned - neat writing, straight margins. Mary's drafts need to be revised and revisions demand a new use of space: writing up the margins, line outs, numbers to indicate new positions of data, pages stapled to the back of one page - all to indicate the kind of new flexibility to deal with new arrangements of information, a more lively language. Mary, and writers of all ages, never end their quest for the best way to use the space of a single page.

## TIME AND SPACE: PROCESS

The writing process is discovered by writing. Process refers to everything a person does from the time the topic is first contemplated to the final moment the paper is completed. Students can be lectured on the components of the process, but the process is still only known by actually doing the writing, making the words fulfill the intentions of the author.

Each writer and written selection involves different time and space dimensions. Space in this instance refers to the dimensions of the process and time over which they function. Time, however, refers to more than clock time. Time also refers to the logical units that mark off the limits of the process. Units in this instance are: rehearsal, spelling, forming letters, rereading, voicing, selecting information, crossing out, editing, drawing, rehearsing, revising, reorganizing. These units follow each other in logical sequences and give the process a body or space of its own. Different stages in the life of a writer, depending on the type of writing, involve different space-time dimensions. In figure 3, below, note the difference between a three and six year old's composing:

FIGURE 3:


THREE YEAR OLD
Grasps pen
Makes round and angular marks
Announces, "This is a dog."
30 seconds
SIX YEAR OLD
REHEARSES BY DRAWING
SPELLS
SOUNDS
REREADS for ORIENTATION
ERASES
CHANGES DRAWING
Talks to neighbor
"I'll HAVE THIS PUBLISHED."
REHEARSE
COMPOSE
TEN MINUTES

For the three year old, the process was merely picking up a pencil, making a mark on the paper, and giving an explanation of the mark. At the age of six, the process is broader and more complex. Most of the operations will later be combined with other unseen acts. Spelling will be automatic and sounding will be internalized; writing will be fast enough that reading for orientation will diminish. The child will "sense" where he is in the process. Rehearsal will also be internalized; drawing won't be necessary. One part of the process becomes more simplified in order to allow for more complex functions, especially those relating to decisions about information. These functions add depth as well as breadth to the space dimensions of the writing process. Mary's case exemplifies how the process changes.

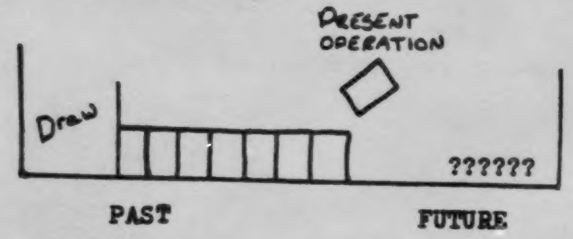
**MARY:**

On the spur of the moment Mary draws and writes two sentences in a ten minute burst. The process ends as sharply as it begins. As Mary writes her last sentence, she is already contemplating her next activity in the math area. She does not survey her writing once it is completed. Mary wrote for the sake of the writing itself, just as she plays in the housekeeping corner. She plays just to enjoy it, not as a means to a conscious end. Ask Mary what writers do when they write. Mary replies, "Draw good and get the words down slowly." Mary does far more complex acts in process than her explanation; nevertheless, her acts are more limited in time and space than they will be in a few years.

Three years later Mary shows her process space has expanded when she shares an oral rehearsal of what will come next in her story. She is no longer functioning in an immediate word by word, composing with much rereading for maintaining her place in a brief narrative. Rather, she has a plan that may have unfolded while writing, or even when she was riding to school on the bus. She transcends the mechanical elements to reflect on topic and information. Now when Mary finishes her writing, she rereads the text to see if it matches her intention. Process components have more depth within the writing episode. Rehearsal has lengthened; she toys with leads, does some editing while composing, rereads for consistency, and even goes back in time to revise something already written.

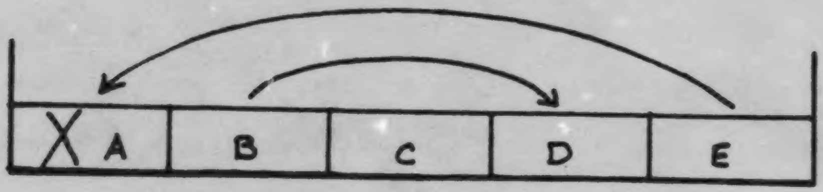
The six-year-old represented in figure three added one operation (one word) to the previous word at a time, with only a dim perspective of where the part (word) fitted into the whole message. The past was shaky, the future almost nonexistent. The nine-year-old expands operations to a much more distinct, past and future. The last part of a piece is related back to the first, even to a written selection composed months before. Figures 4 and 5 show the differences between the six and nine year old more clearly.

**FIGURE 4:** Six Year Old Process



The future is added to the present, one block, one word, one idea at a time. Six blocks beyond the present are a complete unknown to the writer since the units of building are so small. The arduous task of spelling and handwriting, coupled with inexperience, and lack of access practice to information, reduce writing to just "getting it down." Since the child is writing for the sake of writing most of the time, the process is not upsetting to the child.

**FIGURE 5:** Nine Year Old



Meaning units are larger for the nine year old and much more easily manipulated. Block A has been lined out and Block E moved to the beginning of the selection and B moved up to be with Block D. Arrows show a "coming and going" within the process container, a coming and going between what has been written, what is being written and what might be written. This writer has transcended the motor-spelling issues and can concentrate much more on information. The writer doesn't need to draw first since rehearsal can be done inwardly. The child is asked what will come next in the piece and a full account is given to the last sentence. The child has a well-developed future intention. As the writing goes down on the page, the child is free to look back to see if the text follows the original intention. Rereading is not just for orientation, it is for critical confirmation.

## INFORMATION: TIME AND SPACE

Mary writes about her Aunt's wedding. "There were lots of people there. Aunt Ruth was pretty. We had lots of cake and ice cream." The information Mary knows about the wedding also has time-space dimensions to it. Like the space occupied by a problem, or the number of units demanded on computer time, there are limits to what Mary knows about the wedding (space). Within those limits the information has a loose-logical order (time); some of the information is connected by time (sequence), others by association. Mary's message shows she has chosen loosely from the beginning, middle, and end of the wedding. This may be all she feels is necessary for the "doing" of the writing. Or, she may assume that everything she remembers or knows about the wedding is contained in these three short sentences.

Four other paragraphs have been written to show both how writers of different stages would use the wedding, and how time and space dimensions are used.

## THE WEDDING

No. 1

There were lots of people there. Aunt Ruth was pretty. We had lots of cake and ice cream.

No. 2

There were lots of people there. My Aunts, Uncles, grandmother, grandfather, my sisters. There were cars. There were flowers. The day was nice. Aunt Ruth was pretty. She had on a white gown and carried some flowers. She went down the aisle. Everyone looked at her. Then we had lots of cake and ice cream. It was hot. Then we went home.

No. 3

We got up early in the morning to go to Northampton. Mom said we better eat a big breakfast because there wouldn't be anything to eat until the reception. I got my clothes all laid out, then put them into the suitcase. When my Dad started the car, it wouldn't go. Mom said, "Oh no, not agrin." They had a big argument. My Dad banged around and it started. We got there just in time for the wedding. There were all kinds of cars. My cousin got them parked in the right place. We sat next to my other cousin, Kathy. The music played and Aunt Ruth came down the aisle. She was beautiful. She had on a jeweled band across the front and the gown went way down behind her. My other little cousin walked behind her to see that nothing happened to it. They got married and she and my new Uncle Tom kissed. Then they came down the aisle and they were smiling. Then we had a reception. You could hardly move there. There was lots to eat. I had cake, ice cream, pop, sandwiches, salad. Then more ice cream. It was so hot I had to eat lots of ice cream and coke too. My Dad said, "We've got to go now," and my Mom said let's stay. My Dad won and we got into the car. It was a long trip. It was dark when we got home. My Mom said we didn't need anything to eat because we ate so much junk. What a day! I went to bed about ten o'clock.

No. 4

Family wedings - I love them!! Cousins you haven't seen for a long time. There are Aunts, Uncles, lots to eat and fancy clothes. My Aunt Ruth's wedding was something special. We've always been close and I wouldn't miss hers for anything. My new Uncle Tom danced with me at the reception.

No. 5

Aunt Ruth and I have always been close. As she walked down the aisle, regal in white gown and tiara, I wondered if we would still talk. Just that morning my parents had an argument, not a big one, but enough to remind me I might not have Aunt Ruth to run to anymore.

Paragraph No. 2 might occur from three to six months after the writing of No. 1. More details surrounding the beginning, middle, and end of the wedding are present. The space is larger and there are more time bonds between incidents.

A marked change comes with selection No. 3. This is what I call the "bed to bed" narrative. The writer includes everything that happened from the time he got out of bed until he went to bed in the evening. The reporting is thorough, yet indiscriminate. As a result, the writer has unwittingly portrayed complex relationships between father and mother in the day's events. The voice is forthright and fresh. Ask this writer what constitutes good writing and he often says, "It's good if it's long." There are simple bonds to the chronology, each event following the other. The writer writes all that can be remembered.

Paragraphs 4 and 5 are different. Though short, they occupy more space, and provide more depth and distance on the wedding and the human relationships involved. These writers, particularly with the fifth paragraph, do much revision, working back and forth in time in the process, until the words capture some of the human complexities involved in the wedding. The writer of Number 4 selects but still maintains the chronology. No. 5, however, shows Aunt Ruth, but relates the present moment to the past, and in one sense the whole past of the writer, her parents, and Aunt.

When the writer knows the subject (space) and the information within it (time) the writer can actually choose to take out large portions of information without distorting the time-logic of the piece. Before the writer knows how to remove information, he often has to fill in much information, read it, and start the process of taking out, to see how the piece stands. The more the writer can see all components in relation to each other (time) the more selections can be made without distorting the logic within the container of the piece.

Choice is the essence of fine art. When the artist views all the thousands of components, bound by time-logic, and occupying the space-statement, and makes the one choice that fully occupies the space. yet carries the essence of all the time connections, great art is born. That choice stands simply and forcefully alone, and startles us like the opening to Beethoven's fifth symphony.

Take five minutes. Pick out a child and watch him work in relation to the page. No matter the age. View the child at work relating body to space, the regular use of words following words on the page, or even the breaking of standard conventions through other symbol systems needed to add or delete information.

Take another five minutes. Talk with a child about how he went about composing the current piece. Get the child to teach you what he knows about the subject. Then ask, "If you were to put that information in here (the paper or composition) how would you do it?" Or ask, "And what will happen next in your story?" How much does the child reflect past, present and future understnadings in his remarks.

From the last five minute interview, note how the oral information is put together. Later look at the written piece. How did the child add, take out, or use information to teach what he knows? What process of selection is he using?

Become an active observer of children. Build in the time to note how and what they write. It won't be long before time-space dimensions take on even more meaning. You will hear such child statements with new meaning: "I was wondering about this piece last night . . . I think I'll write about whales next time. I know more about them. I'm going back to fix the beginning. I don't like it." Every one of these statements shows a different understanding of time and space as well as their preceptions of how they bring the writing process under their control.

# Chapter VI

## When Writing Speaks

Six year old Dana speaks to himself as he writes. A glance over ten year old Cheryl's shoulder shows a paper filled with blackened letters and exclamation marks. Charlie sits before an empty paper in sixth period English class. He hates to write and mutters obscenities under his breath. Kristina is in the final moments of revising her piece for a women's magazine. These are the touches that will make her language sound spontaneous... like speech. All of these writers have one thing in common; they make the transition from speech to print. They come to terms with their speaking voices.

If writers come to terms with their speaking voices, teachers need to. Writers like Dana, Cheryl, Charlie, or Kristina go through a never-ending shift from speech to print. They want their voices to be heard on the page. From birth they have been used to the sound of their own voice, expressing what they mean orally through stories, anecdotes, repartee, transactions, directions, or argument. When they write, it is only natural they want their voices to echo from the page. Teachers who understand the place of speech in writing can practice teaching as a craft because they know what to look for in writers' voices.

### Speaking and Writing

Writing is not speech. Writing wears the guise of speech since it uses the same material; words, information, order, organization. But there is a chasm between speech and print. When I write, I supply everything. Alone and in silence I provide energy, initiative, information, language, order and the conventions to communicate with an unseen audience of one or thousands, who may not read my writing for days, months, or years.

I write my own companionship on to the page. As Donald Murray, the professional writer says, "write for the other self." But the other self may not be there when I first put pen to paper. Until I know information, a sense of voice - what I want to say, there may not be another self at the outset. Thus, I struggle alone to create the other self on the page.

When I speak I am not alone and my companions usually help me with what I want to say. They smile, frown, lean toward me, express disinterest, rapt attention. My message is usually short and geared for the context provided for me. Response is immediate. From second to second I have a reflection of the effects of my voice. If I don't like the reflection, I can change what I say on the spot.

Speech is rapid. Persons of all ages can produce more words and in shorter time than in writing. Speech carries extra meaning in the stress given to certain words, hand signals, face, setting, and the distance used to communicate.

Young writers soon find different social expectancies for writing than for speaking. Whereas they acquire oral language through experimentation, repetition, and errors within the hopeful expectations and models of their parents, school has changed things. Now there is a concern for early correctness, proper etiquette, with little attention given to content. In speech it was the other way around - content was primary, conventions secondary. Children have more ownership of their speech; they rent their writing.

Read a transcript of a speech to see the difference between speech and writing. You were impressed by the content and dynamism of the speaker who spoke without a written text. The unedited transcript shocks you. It is filled with unheard redundancies, dangling sentences, assumed meanings, and meaningless asides. The speaker seems disorganized, yet you remember the speech as a moving event. It was. It's just that speech is not writing. The side dishes are missing from the main meal. Eye contact, hand signals, the rise and fall of the voice with emphases given to key words. . . are all gone from the transcript. There is little flavor to transcribed talk because the flavor was in the voice and nonverbal language supplied with the speech.

Reverse the process and look at a speech written by a professional. The writer makes writing sound like speech. The writing is simple, direct, forceful like speech. The writing sounds spontaneous. Such a feat has only been accomplished through many drafts where the touches of wit and spontaneity come only in the final revisions.

Writing and speaking are different but writing, without an understanding of speech roots, is nothing. The human voice underlies the entire writing process, and shows itself throughout the life of the writer. It is no accident that children enjoy reading their selections aloud, professional writers have public readings of their work, or that writing compels us to speak to others, to voice to ourselves.

The importance of the human voice was brought home to me as a young teen when I had the rare opportunity to hear the great Arturo Toscanini conduct a rehearsal of the NBC Symphony Orchestra. The orchestra had played but a few measures, when the tempestuous Toscanini dashed his baton to the floor, raced through the second violin section to stop at the station of a young violinist. "Your violin is not singing. Sing it!" he commanded. Before the entire orchestra the poor violinist had to sing the opening bars of the symphony. "No wonder," he shouted, "No wonder you play like that. You don't know how to sing it. Never forget, all instruments are voices. They try, however feebly, to copy the human voice. Tonight you practice singing at home. When you can sing, your violin will sing."

Since the human voice is such an elemental part of writing, each writer has to come to terms with the transition from speech to print. Different ages and learning situations dictate their own forms of including the human voice in writing. Four writers of different ages and abilities have been chosen to demonstrate the change. They are: Dana, age six; Cheryl, age ten; Charlie, age eleven; and Kristina, a professional writer.

## DANA, GRADE ONE, AGE SIX

Dana has been writing for two weeks. He quickly sketches in a war at the top of a 12 X 18 inch piece of paper. On the left side a cluster of jets swoop toward the right. "Ffffffff" sounds escape his lips as he makes jet trail marks. From the right side another cluster of jets fire at those on the left. Dana provides full sound effects as he creates the setting for his writing. Dana showed the same behaviors earlier that morning in a war fought in the block area.

Sounds continue as Dana writes. Note the ratio of writing to oral language in Figure 1 below:

Line 1 - Writing the g t t s
Line 2 - Speaking the the guh guy gut t "the gut guys"

The first line shows what letter Dana actually wrote in relation to the second line, the language and sound he supplied as he wrote. It is not unusual for there to be twenty times more sounding-speaking than writing with children of this age. A sensitive tape recorder easily picks up this language. It is often difficult to hear unless you are seated next to the child. Dana uses speech everywhere and in a wide range of function: sounding letters, saying words before they are written, after writing them, rereading, making procedural statements, or comments to other children. As James Britton aptly states, "Writing floats on a sea of speech."

## DANA: REFLECTION

Now Dana is pleased with the sound of his voice and the results of his writing. It is enough to get print on the page. So much of his writing has been egocentric play with most of the language produced for his own consumption. Later Dana will not be as pleased. Soon the reactions of others, his own reading abilities and his distance on process will produce dissatisfactions. Dana begins to take on audience and comes to terms with imperfections in the writing toward the end of grade one and on into the second. In such a time, experimentation decreases, progress slows, the children become more conservative and quite interested in the orthodoxy of writing, particularly the conventions. This is a vulnerable time in the life of a young writer.

Dana will speak less as he puts the tools of handwriting and spelling behind him. Because his teacher provides time for writing four days a week, he becomes more and more familiar with the process. There is less need for language to accompany the process as shown in Figure 1. Because of his interest in conventions and the desire to bring sound from the page, he is interested in the contribution of exclamation and quotation marks. They help him in reporting the sound and action of his writing when he reads to his classmates.

## CHERYL: GRADE FIVE, AGE TEN

Cheryl writes first thing in the morning in her fifth grade class. Fifteen minutes before, she got off the bus to chat with friends on the playground about their favorite Sunday night TV situation comedy. Now she will sit quietly and alone before her empty page, waiting for words to come for her piece about a sliding accident with friends the previous week. This morning the words come more quickly than usual. She writes, "WHAM! WHAP! We HIT the tree." Pauses . . . looks over her words and blackens in HIT with the edge of her pencil. The essential action of the accident has been put to paper. She pauses again, searching for more words, looking down at the broad stretches of whiteness beyond the few already composed. She glances back at the space after her words wishing the words would emerge on their own from the paper. Cheryl begins to twitch in her chair, looks around the room, glances at her friend, Heidi, who is also looking around the room. "Heidi," calls Cheryl, "I'm writing about that mess we got into last Saturday with the toboggan. I'm stuck. I've only got one thing down."

"Whatcha got?" queries Heidi.

"Not much." Cheryl reads her line and adds, "But after that, what is there?"

"Well, silly, you could put in about how we got into trouble over it. You know, your Mom!"

"Don't say any more. That's enough. Why didn't I think of that? I'm sooooo stupid!"

## CHERYL: REFLECTION

Cheryl sits alone and quietly writes the essential action of her story - right off the top of her enthusiasm. She uses a familiar approach to children age eight through ten. She puts in action words and exclamation points to signify action and excitement. "WHAM! WHAP! We HIT the tree." Similar to a speech situation her sentence contains the essential elements of action. In conversation more content would be prompted or supplied by friends. Cheryl, without realizing this underlying structure, naturally turns and speaks to her friend.

Cheryl's exclamation marks and the blackening in of letters are also speechmarks, prosodic markers. Cheryl wants her writing to sound more like speech, like story telling, and instinctively puts those in as well. They are voice marks wherein she puts value into a word through blackening it. On another occasion she might capitalize whole words, or the initial letter of a noun or key verb. This is not done with the conscious view of putting in speech, yet it is a clear indicator of some necessary transitions made by children of this age.

Cheryl feels different emotions as she writes. Writing brings out a different emotional register in the writing than in Cheryl's speech. Most research pretends that emotions are not part of writing. Show me a writer or teacher who has not been aware of their booming presence. Cheryl goes from excitement (first words on paper) to wonderment (what happened to the rest of the story?), to anxiety (how will I get out of this mess and fill the paper?), to self-disgust (Why didn't I think of that?). Seldom with one line in speaking will Cheryl encounter such a range of feeling, such a range of ego involvement. Emotions run high because we meet ourselves so directly in the silence and aloneness of writing.

Cheryl is in a good teaching situation. She is writing about something she knows and can speak with her neighbor, Heidi, for help. Consider the transition from speech to print in the next case where the teaching situation is very different.

## CHARLIE: GRADE SIX, AGE ELEVEN

Charlie knows he will write today because every Friday after lunch is writing time in English. He wonders what the topic will be this week. This is his most hated moment in the week because he has problems with everything related to writing. These problems have been pointed out to him since third grade. Charlie takes his seat. The dreaded words come his way: "Clear your desks, paper out, pencils at the ready. This week's assignment is to write about a day you might have with Abraham Lincoln. You have all heard about Abraham Lincoln. I want you to write now about what it would be like if you could spend a day with him. Class, what are you going to look out for? Anyone? Yes, Sandy."

"No spelling or punctuation errors, Mr. Chase?"

"You've got it, Sandy. This time I take off five points for any misspelled word, two for any word that is illegible, and two for any misplaced punctuation marks. Begin."

Charlie stares at his empty paper, his mind blank as usual in these first moments. It takes him five minutes to get over the shock of the assignment. He feels his heart beating in his ear lobes. "Fucking bastard," he mutters to himself. He doesn't know if he hates Mr. Chase more than Abraham Lincoln.

"Better get crackin', Charles. A clean sheet of paper will never win a Nobel prize for literature," breathes Mr. Chase over his shoulder.

"Up yours," mutters Charlie when Mr. Chase is out of earshot. The white piece of paper is still there. Would that it might be a flag of truce declaring, "No Writing Today." Charlie leans to a friend and whispers, "Hey Andy, look, I haven't made any mistakes yet."

Charlie turns to his task again. No images. Somehow he can't produce an image of himself with the tall, bearded president. He probes again. "My Uncle Freddie has a beard and he likes to hunt. Lincoln musta hunted sometime." A line works its way - "a bear, maybe Lincoln shot a bear. There musta been lots of bears in those days. Shit, there's nothin' on the paper yet. I'll have to stay after school. Let's see . . . the bear, bears. Oh, I'll just write somethin'." Charlie writes with his left hand crooked at right angles to his body, the pencil moving laboriously across the page, his mouth moving slightly.

"There were lottsa bears in those days."

He stops, rereads, mumbling, "LINcoln, LINcoln, LINC on" and writes:

"Lincon livd in the woods an he liked to hunt."

Stops again and rereads from the beginning. His mouth flattens in satisfaction. The mouth withdraws. "Shit, this is supposed to be about me and Lincoln. How me gonna get in? He hunts. We hunt. Ah!"

"Lincon asked if I'd come and I said sure."

"Hey Andy, I'm done, are you? "Chase-his-ass" can't say I'm not. Look, I got me and Lincoln in here."

## CHARLIE: REFLECTION

Charlie struggles for access to his assigned topic. Writing but once a week, and well aware of his faults of poor handwriting and spelling, Charlie comes to both writing and topic at great disadvantage. Anger has been building since third grade. Still, he must use the writing process and make the switch from speech to print.

Used to short bursts of "jiving" with friends when speaking, the expanse of an 8½ by 10 inch white paper on which to compose an alien story, is a formidable obstacle. Charlie has long since rejected filling papers and solves the obstacle problem by writing as little as possible. Thus, he begins to outline his form of counter-ownership.

The voice of ownership is continued in sotto voce obscenities via speaking, the easiest place to reaffirm control. He uses humor, both with himself and with Andy, also using Mr. Chase's name in clever fashion, showing his ability to transform words to his own use. The humor and chatter with Andy also takes some of the sting out of aloneness. It is just about impossible for Charlie, under these assignment circumstances, to create any voice or person on the page.

Still, Charlie must write. As he does he shows some features marking the switch from speech to print. There is self-dialogue, mouthing and sounding of words, the ear still dominant as in speaking roots. Words run together without the aid of visual memories of words as in "lottsa". Writing but once a week, Charlie has developed few automatic pathways in handwriting and spelling. Thus, he is constantly lost, needing to reread for orientation in selections as short as three sentences.

## KRISTINA: PROFESSIONAL WRITER

Kristina read over her draft. This was a feature for a women's magazine. She wanted to put in the touches that would make the words snap, the way she felt about her own helplessness the first time she was hoodwinked by an airline. She vividly recalled spending a needless night in Raleigh, North Carolina because she missed a flight connection. If she had asked why she would have learned the problem was undiagnosed even though the airline stated a one hour delay. Indeed, she could recall many instances in her life where if she'd asked why the result might have been different.

"Ask 'Why?'"

by Kristina

"I'm sorry, Sir, but we have experienced equipment difficulties, and our flight will be delayed for one hour," the flight attendant explained to the business man in front of me.

"Oh," replied the man and went to the waiting section for flight 286 to Greenville, South Carolina.

I was next in line and didn't wait for the spiel.

"Why?" I asked curtly.

Heads from other passengers turned like an E. F. Hutton commercial. The face of one said, "Pushy bitch," four others said, "Good question . . . why?"

"Well, uh, I don't know."

"Would you kindly find out for me; I need to know." I asked.

The flight attendant motioned to a gentleman dressed differently than the other in red jacket. Then whispered to him - probably the nature of my inquiry.

The man in the red jacket glanced my way, smiled and said, "Just one moment; I'll find out for you immediately."

She wanted the story to show a new, resolute voice. This usually meant removing words, cutting away unnecessary information to let the main force of her points through. She took her favorite editing pen and went to work:

"Ask Why"

by Kristina

"I'm sorry, Sir, ," "but we have experienced equipment difficulties; ~~and our~~ the flight will be delayed ~~for~~ one hour," (the flight attendant explained to the business man in front of me.)

"Oh," ~~replied~~ shrugged the man and ~~went~~ strolled to the waiting section. ~~for flight 286 to Greenville, South Carolina.~~

~~I was next in line and~~ I didn't wait for ~~the~~ another spiel.

"Ask Why"

by Kristina

"I'm sorry, Sir," the flight attendant explained to the business man in front of me, "but we have experienced equipment difficulties; the flight will be delayed one hour."

"Oh," shrugged the man and strolled to the waiting section.

I didn't wait for another spiel. "Why?" I asked curtly.

Five male passengers turned like an E. F. Hutton commercial. One face said, "Pushy bitch," the others: "Good question . . . why?"

"Well, uh, I don't know." she replied.

"I have to know," I countered.

The attendant motioned to a red-jacketed official. As they whispered the man in charge glanced my way, smiled, and said, "Just one moment; I'll find out for you immediately."

"Why?" I asked curtly.

~~Heads from other~~ Five male passengers turned like an E.F. Hutton commercial. ~~The face of one~~ One face said, "Pushy bitch," ~~four~~ the others: ~~said,~~ "Good question . . . why?"

"Well, uh, I don't know." She replied.

~~"Would you kindly find out for me,~~ "I ~~need~~ have to know." I ~~asked.~~ countered

The ~~flight~~ attendant motioned to a ~~gentleman dressed differently than the others in a red jacket.~~ red jacketed official

~~Then~~ As they whispered ~~to him probably the nature of my inquiry.~~

The man in ~~the red jacket~~ charge glanced my way, smiled, and said, "Just one moment; I'll find out for you immediately."

### KRISTINA: REFLECTION

Kristina's written dialogue is very different than the actual exchange at the airport. When the episode first occurred there were extra words and much non-verbal information exchanged between the parties. To produce the effect of speech Kristina provides only the essentials of action and dialogue. Thus the written text takes on the grace of conversation. As readers we feel as though we were listening in, or the writer is speaking directly to us. Kristina does this in two ways; she takes away unnecessary information and heightens what is left with more detail.

We don't need to know where the flight is going, nor do we need to know she was next in line a second time. She had already shown in the first sentence that the business man was in front of her. The dress of the flight attendant is also incidental to the fast pace she wants in the dialogue. Just noting that there is a man "in charge" is all the information we need.

Note how Kristina provides more detailed verbs in changing replied to shrugged, went to strolled, or asked to countered. The right verbs provide a more detailed picture of the action. There is contrast between the shrugging man and the demanding Kristina. Whereas ten year old Cheryl explicitly provides speech through interjections, blackened and capitalized words, Kristina implicitly removes words and uses others with greater precision.

## CHAPTER VII

## HANDWRITING IS FOR WRITING

Handwriting is for writing. Children win prizes for fine script, parents and teachers nod approval for a crisp, well-crafted page, a good impression is made on a job application blank . . . all important elements but they pale next to the substance they carry. The content of agreements to free hostages, the Declaration of Independence, a love note, a personal diary, all take precedence over the script. Handwriting is the vehicle carrying information on its way to a destination. If it is illegible the journey will not be completed. Handwriting, like skin, shows the outside of the person. But beneath the skin beats the living organism, the life's blood, the ideas, information.

When the child first puts pen to paper he begins the journey from a highly conscious participation in the process to the time when the shaping of letters in words to sentences becomes automatic. The mechanical element is put behind the writer and consciousness is devoted to the information, the sentence under construction, the whole argument, play, poem, or letter to a friend.

Children show us the nature of this journey through the appearance of letters on the page, and their use of space. They show us the course and progress of their development. The focus of this chapter is on the nature of this development and the problems children need to solve to put handwriting behind them.

Children develop their handwriting by acting on the page. They move through the space of a paper making letters, one after the other in messages for themselves and others. This motion is called praxis. How they learn is shown in the pressure in letters and words (light and heavy formations) and in the way the letters occupy the paper space. Note the differences in these formations:

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Place Figure One here

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Toni has just written the word, "super"; Note the difference in letter heights and the difference in pressure put on strokes going away from the body. (P) Her word occupies far more than the space confines of the lines. Toni is interested in getting the word down, in "doing: writing as opposed to the exactitude of fulfilling exact space function. Toni also shows that pressure is greater when her hand is moving away from her body (P). Pressure control and use of space will tell her developmental story from this point on.

## PRESSURE

Toni's pressure, like that for any other writer, is controlled through the dismission of large muscles and the facilitation of small muscles. Small muscles have a chance when the following occurs:

1. Placement of the work: The paper needs to be slightly to the right of midline and turned at a 45 degree angle. In this way it is possible to maintain small muscle control from the top to bottom of the page. Otherwise as the writer moves down the page and the hand gets closer to the body the pressure of large muscles come into play. Teachers themselves can try this out for themselves by:

    A. Placing the paper directly in front of them with the midline of writer bisecting the center of the paper. Now just move the arm down the left side, one inch in from the edge of the paper. Do you feel the pull of muscles in the upper arm and right side of the torso?

    B. Try the same exercise but with the paper slightly to the right and turned at 45 degrees. The same on the left for left-handed persons.

2. Arm and wrist placement on the table: If the wrist and arm are not in motion, but on the table then the action of larger muscles are diminished and the work of the fingers can come into play. With this the motion of the torso is also reduced, thus helping the fingers again.

3. Pencil grip: If the pencil is held at an angle to the paper, the full downward thrust of the pencil is reduced, thus giving the pencil a chance to have the right pressure. The grip is aided by the coordinated action of thumb, index and middle finger. It is not unusual to find children gripping the pencil like an ice pick, or write with a stirring motion.

## CONTROL

The page space is discovered by writing. The detailed control of pencil motion is dependent on the development of small muscles, and the growing precision of eye and hand working together. The eye coordinates with hand for the right dosage of pressure. Like gunners shooting at a moving target children undershoot, then overshoot in working with lines. They jump into work energetically, writing in bold strokes to show their meanings. It is natural enough to use larger script since children interpret size with quality anyway. There are two basic motions in working with letters in manuscript, the circle and the straight line. The circle is the more sophisticated from the small muscle rotation, the straight line more susceptible to the problems of the dismissing force.

## PHASE OVERVIEW

There are five general phases that are discernible in children's handwriting development. These are phases that overlap and perhaps ought to be thought of as general guidelines for viewing the development of the young writer. Much more work is needed on these stages and handwriting in general to look at the effects of acquiring handwriting skills in the midst of the composing process. Handwriting has not been viewed enough as a tool of composition.

All five of these phases of development can come in the first year of a child's schooling. This, of course, depends on how much opportunity children have to write, and what kind of help is given them by the teacher.

## GET-IT-DOWN-PHASE

Children are relentless in their pursuit of writing when they first come to school. Like waves rolling to the shore, the child persists in putting letters, numbers, drawings on the paper. Mary and Dana, push to express in writing is the same as that of playing in blocks, with dolls or trucks in a sandbox. They simply express. They observe some conventions with letters following letters, words following words. At first, just putting the words on paper enough for them. And they do in undulating fashion across the page - Toni's words rise and fall as her voice does:

```
WL   FRS   A   N
               RD
               WE
               NYK
               FO
               Wt
               WE
               WN
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"When we went to New York we rode on a Ferris Wheel."

Within a few weeks most of the children have the idea of composing from left to right but their concern is just that - <u>generally</u> from left to right but with little consideration for the spaces.

## FIRST AESTHETICS:

From the beginning children show their concern for aesthetics when they reshape a letter or word. They show a gauging of word placement as they check the length of the page in relation to their message. In particular many show it with a curious "cleaning" of their pages. Just before they start to write on a clean sheet of paper - a paper without smudge or lettering, they brush it from top to bottom. There is a sense of wanting the page to be clean, fresh for the writing. This same behavior has been observed in older writers - all the way from grade school children up through professional writers. If there is a change in a letter or word, they spend much time in erasing the black or smudge away. They want it to look "clean".

When children first make "errors" they want to banish them forever. The eraser is their strongest ally. How to control an eraser is another story. It is an even more sophisticated action than controlling the point of a pen. There is greater resistance between eraser and paper demanding an even lighter touch and therefore more precise use of small muscles. Often, the child wants to eradicate the error so strongly that he attacks the paper, pushing hard with the eraser. The effort is so great that the child often rubs through the paper and rips it. It is also not unusual for the child to have to deal with two or three errors on the same blackened sopt. Frustration at righting the "burned out" paper is clearly imaged on the face of the child. Different writing surfaces need to be considered for beginning writers who wish to make the early changes in the appearance of their writing.

## GROWING AGE OF CONVENTION:

Toward the end of the first grade many children want their writing to appear conventional. Depending on the background of the child, experience in writing at home, general aesthetic orientation, this phase could come much earlier. They are fussy about spacing between words, margins, writing above and below the line. This age of convention affects not just handwriting but spelling and punctuation as well. There is less of the relentless surge to write and more a looking over, the beginnings of introspection, the critical eye that slows down production. Chidlren hear and feel the critiques of other children and the teacher. Before this there was such an egocentric surge that the child just ignored audiences, or suggestions from others. The child didn't look back at a piece. The doing was everything.

Now it has changed. The child starts to look back and look back critically. Content now takes a back seat for many as they want to do things the right way. Output decreases as well.

## BREAKING CONVENTIONS

This phase is almost completely dependent on the teacher's approach to the craft of teaching. About the time the child has gained early mastery of handwriting and spelling conventions, problems of information arise. In conference it becomes clear to both parties, child and teacher, that important information belongs in the text. This raises problems for the child. If the information is to go into the text, how is this accomplished once the text is already written? Problems of space and aesthetics arise. Note how Mary Ellen Giacobbe deals with both problems in this conference with Chris, a first grader:

Ms. G: I see that you were able to put in the word "may" to show that "Brontosaurus' may travel in families." (Chris had been able to sandwich in the small word without erasing.) But you didn't say why they travel in families.

Chris: They travel in families to protect the young.

Ms. G: Do you think that is important information?

**Chris:** Yes, but there isn't any place to put it. (The writing goes from left to right over to the right hand margin at the bottom of the paper. Above the writing is a picture of a brontosaurus.)

**Ms. G:** Look the paper over and show me where you could write it in.

**Chris:** There isn't any. (voice rising)

**Ms.G:** Look the entire paper over and put your hand on any space where there isn't writing or drawing. (There is space above the drawing.)

**Chris:** Well, I could put it up here (motions to the top of the paper) but it would look stupid. The other part is down here.

**Ms. G:** How could you show they were connected?

**Chris:** I could put an arrow down here pointing to the part that's at the top.

**Ms. G:** Good, but you'll need to connect the arrow with the top. This is what writers do when they are getting their books ready for the publisher.

Chris knew additional information would create a mess. His usual approach was to erase words to put in new ones. Now his teacher has shown him how to control new information when there is a problem of space. She has also shown him for the first time that the draft is temporary, that a rewriting is necessary. Young writers need to learn a whole repertoire for "messing up" their paper to deal with new information, organization, and adjustments. This also adds to the importance of crafting the letters in the final draft. If children have control of the process, know their information is good, the quality of their handwriting usually improves.

Older children like eight year old Andrea show in their handwriting when they take on the draft concept. Andrea, like writers of most any age or experience, hoped her first draft would be her last. About the sixth word into this selection, her handwriting shows she decided another draft would follow:

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Place Figure Two here

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## LATER AESTHETICS

It is a significant moment when any child decides to line out instead of erasing an error. This immediately signals the paper is but a draft, the text can be reworked, further copies will be made that are much more pleasing. It shows that the child perceives a progression from rough to smooth. There are only a few children who are able to compose first copy with all information needed.

Children who have reworked material through several drafts, who have taken greater pride in their information, do transfer this into more pleasing final copy. Teaching children italic, the crafting of final copy with special paper or instruments is especially helpful to children who have recrafted their work and now feel positive about the content of their writing.

Professional writers are often portrayed as persons who are slipshod about the appearance of their writing. But the literature are replete with the fetishes of writers who must have certain pens and papers or they simply can't compose. There is a time for all writers when crisp copy, free from scratching, revisions, and notes is necessary. After revising a paper for four or five times, including notes, I have to sit and retype until there aren't errors. There are some pages, especially leads, that have given me great difficulty, that I can't wait to retype without error just to look at them and say, "There, that's that; the copy at least feels good."

## TIME AND TOPIC

Time and topic still have as much to do with a child's handwriting development as any issues mentioned thus far. If children have enough writing time, and control of their topics, handwriting improves. Children, ages six through nine, ought to have a minimum of twenty minutes a day for composing along topics of their choice. When children have a well-chosen topic, their urge to express so dominates the activity that they lose track of the conscious aspect of handwriting to focus more on the message. Thus, the child becomes more relaxed in dealing with the mechanical aspects of handwriting, in being "lost" in the message.

## HANDWRITING DISABILITY

Handwriting disability is on the increase. As more attention is given to the need for writing, articles will spring up as in the January 1982 issue of McCalls magazine about children who have severe handwriting disability, dysgraphia. The neurologically impaired child who struggles to write does exist but the actual incidence is extremely rare.

Children are often pointed out to me as disabled in handwriting. "This child has motor problems. We don't know what to do with him. He can't even copy these three paragraphs from the board without becoming fatigued."

It is not difficult to create an apparent disability. Children whose content is ignored, yet who receive constant critiques of poor handwriting, can develop some pernicious views of their ability to write. They feel they have nothing to say since they usually don't separate the ability to compose information from their ability to produce acceptable-looking script.

Two children in our National Institute of Education study were chosen because they had poor handwriting. They diagnosed themselves, along with their teachers as poor handwriters. When writing they complained of fatigue, protected it from the views of others, constantly erased and composed no more than two to three sentences in an hour's writing time. Furthermore, they hated writing, and saw little sense in what they were doing. We prepared to gather systematic data from them on eighteen handwriting variables.

We abandoned the study of handwriting variables about a month into the two year study. Once the two children became interested in their subjects and were permitted to share what they knew with others, they forgot about their handwriting. Besides, they were writing every day and gained much practice in handwriting through the composing of messages that meant something to them and their classmates. The result: their handwriting improved.

Persons working with the severely handicapped can cite case after case where there is a will to compose under the most adverse physical barriers. When human beings want to get a message to another person, it is virtually impossible to stop them. Pencils held by the teeth, two fingers, or held by a claw, have scratched out messages, taking as long as two hours or more to compose. Some persons may not be able to copy two pages from the board, or compose a two paragraph theme, or seem overly fatigued by two sentences. The failure to complete these tasks if often cited as a disability. If "can't do" is our criteria for calling a child disabled, where do we draw the line on disability. Those persons using the term "disability" had better take a hard look at what writing is for, at the ability of the person to make simple circles and lines, the load of meaningful writing, before using the term professionally.

## WRITING SPEED

Speed is closely connected with practice. If the familiar motor pathways are not built up through regular writing about topics the writer knows, then the slow speed can hamper the content of the selection. The writing goes down so slowly that the writer becomes a word by word writer. That is, each word takes so long to compose that the next word or even the rest of the sentence cannot be contemplated along with the one under construction. This hampers access to information. The writer does not have the same access to experience as the person who can quickly write large units of experience. In short, speed begets access and a more complete view of the entire selection under construction. This leads to a different text cohesion than the one composed in information units at the word level.

Children who first write often compose as slow as 1.5 words per minute. Adults who wish to find out the impact of such a rate, can try writing a six word sentence in nine minutes. Since it is difficult to take that long you will need someone to read times to you, to make sure you take the full nine minutes to compose. When you have finished composing at this rate think of the issues the slow speed raised for you. What was the overall impact of slow speed on information? How well could you retain the overall picture of what you wanted to say? Think of what your composing would mean if you were writing about something you knew nothing about. Once again, for children who write slowly, it is all the more important that they have chosen subjects for which they have an experiential, chronological base since the slow speed hampers access to information as well their overall sense of where the word or sentence under construction fits in with the overall force of the paper.

The speed of writing has much to do with the quality of the selection. Good writers in the nine to ten year old bracket write from eight to nineteen words per minute when composing. I do not have data on older children. I would never give young writers a speed check but for some children who struggle I may do informal time checks to see if speed is a factor. The check is made only during a start and stop interval. This is a handwriting speed check, not a composing speed check. The latter mav be useful for other reasons. In this instance you are merely trying to see if the motor rate is slow enough to have influence on the content or accessibility of the writer to it.

But now the disclaimer. For writers who have a strong urge to compose, a message that must be written, the intensity of the message and the persistence of the writer push aside the speed of handwriting as an issue. The writing will get down on the paper regardless of cause to slow it down.

## APPEARANCE AS AN ISSUE

If handwriting is divorced from content two classes of problems result.

One group of writers feel their information is good because the handwriting is clear. Another group has dismissed their experiences and views about issues as unimportant because their handwriting has been deemed unacceptable.

Many writers, particularly males, have heard for years their writing is messy. Sadly they equate messiness with knowledge. If the writing is not pleasing to the eye it must not be pleasing to the mind. They accept too quickly their low state of being without worthwhile information. Mina Shaughnessy in her work with young college students entering the New York system under open admissions found that the barrier of poor handwriting was one of her most formidable obstacles in helping young writers. She observed:

> Thus it is not unusual to find among freshman essays a handwriting that belies the maturity of the student, reminding the reader instead of the labored cursive style of children. Often, but not always, the content that is carried in such writing is short and bare, reinforcing the impression of the reader that the writer is "slow" or intellectually immature. Yet the same student mignt be a spirited, cogent talker in class. His problem is that he has no access to his thoughts or personal style through the medium of writing and must appear, whenever he writes, as a child.

Make no mistake, if handwriting has a poor appearance the writer is judged in our culture. This won't end tomorrow. The surface features will attract far more attention than the underlying structures. For a person who has poor handwriting, a difficult road is ahead. In spite of the high quality of ideas and information, a lifelong burden will be the lot of the writer. Such a road is unnecessary. For teachers who practice writing as a craft, following the writer's intention within the topic choice, and for those who know how writers develop their skill in handwriting, both objectives of good writing with a pleasing script are attainable. In later chapters on the of writing we will see how handwriting can be taught within the act of composing itself. When the handwriting flows the writer has better access to his own thoughts and information. This is why writers want to write. This is why handwriting is for writing.

## CHAPTER TEN - REVISION

Children show us what they see in writing when they change something. This is what revision is all about - seeing again. Sarah erases her drawing of Woodsy Owl; the face isn't right. Fred erases a word, sounds it through again, then writes it more neatly on the line. Douglas quickly draws a line through his first sentence and rewrites it below where he has skipped lines to accomodate for revisions. Andrea stops, rereads her entire page, marks a number one in the margin of the first page, draws an arrow to the bottom of the page, turns it, and marks a number one in the margin of the next page. These actions mean the material from one page should be transferred to the next to reorganize the information. All of these children have shown us what they see in their writing.

If teachers are to help children control their writing, they need to know what children see, and the process and orders of their visions.

Without help, most revision makes little sense to children. The dictum, "Revise your writing," leads to a few more words spelled correctly, some extra commas, or the erasure of black smudges in the margin. The face is a little more clean. Beyond that the child says, "How do I revise? Where do I begin? Looks alright to me."

Most every child is able to change something. What, and how much the child changes depends on the force and depth of the voice, what the child sees in the writing, and his level of development. Teachers must be acquainted with how children show each of these if they are to help revise at all.

This chapter focuses on two major aspects of revision: First, the principles underlying children's revisions. Second, the general orders of children's changing perceptions as shown in their revisions.

## PRINCIPLES

Vision is tangled up with perception. I see a problem in my draft because I can separate it from the word mass. The more I write, the more my perceptions change, even within the composing of a single article. Some paragraphs cause an irritation because they don't fit with what I hope will be the final feel of a draft. Sometimes I catch the movement of an idea out of the corner of my eye. This is the way it is with vision: first distinguishing the part, word or idea, then realizing where it fits in relation to the whole production, and finally noticing ideas in the shadows that demand further rewriting.

Children acquire perceptions by writing. Eye, hand, mouth, and ear work together to aid and understand the process of putting words on paper. Because they write, children's perceptions expand. Children learn to read their own writing and the writing of others, a very different form of reading than reading a published reader or library book. Children learn to use a page, see the process in greater depth, and increase their choices when they use information within a topic they know. Vision comes with experience, in working with someone who will expand the vision through questions and responses to the child's work in progress.

Perception is strongly linked to children's concepts of what they are doing. When Mary notes that an extra letter is needed in the spelling of a word, she has perceived an imbalance communicated by eye, ear and hand. But she goes back to adjust her perception because she conceives that the more accurate the spelling the more she will be able to read the word at another time. If Mary is asked what writers do to write well she state, "Spell good, be neat and write slowly."

Concept principles follow the child's growth in time and space. Children change what is "up-front" in their concept of the writing operation. For this reason children change what is important to them in the writing process and in this order:

1. Spelling
2. Motor-aesthetic issues
3. Conventions (punctuation,capitalizations)
4. Topic and information
5. Major revisions, addition and exclusion of information, reorganizations

Each of these five (outlined in detail in Chapter Three) merely show the order of dominance of child changes. From the outset, children are able to make changes in most of the five areas. The category is in dominace when the concept is one the child employs at the conscious independent level.

Mary is sensitive to spelling changes because this is the dominant category in her understanding of what is important in the writing process. Soon after her focus moves to handwriting formation and the general appearance of her page. With good teaching, Mary will progress through mechanical stages to make changes in topic, information, and then major crafting changes in her selection. The good teaching follows and extends Mary's perceptions of what she is already doing when she writes. The teacher tries to bring Mary's perceptions to the conscious level that she might revise unaided. Revisions that children make as a result of the conference can be at a much higher level than those done when the child is working and reading alone. It is the difference between aided and unaided recall in reading.

## REVISION AND DEVELOPMENT

Sarah revised before she came to school. When something wasn't satisfying to her, she changed it. Blocks were transformed into new creations; furniture was rearranged in her doll house. If she didn't like the shape of a dog's head in her drawing, she changed it. Imbalances that were irritating or dissatisfying to the eye were changed until they were more satisfying. The project was abandoned if the problem was

was too difficult to solve.

Sarah has come to school. She continues to change things. Drawings, crafts are changed and materials in her cubby are rearranged until their order is satisfying, Sarah perceives imbalances and rights them according to her understanding of what ought to be changed.

Sarah begins to write the first week of school. She struggles to make her invented spellings accurate enough to be read at a later time. She goes back to change words until they offer more clues for reading to her teacher. Sarah also brushes her paper, erases black smudges, and studies its overall appearance. Spelling and appearance are at the conscious level of her attention.

Writing is a play activity for Sarah. She talks, laughs with friends as she writes. Changes in her writing come mostly at the point of extending the play. There is little concept of the work as a message usable at another place and time. In short, Sarah writes for the sake of writing. She especially likes the drawing that goes with the writing.

## First Uses of Information

When Sarah first writes she doesn't use the narrative form. There really isn't any chronological order to her writing. The information swirls around one topic. Susan Sowers points out that many children use a pre-narrative, or pre-ordered form of writing that is a necessary stage of development. An example of such writing is Sarah's writing about "Guz":

Guz was a little caterpillar.
I like Guz very much.
Jessica likes Guz very much, too.
Audrey and I like to play with Guz.
Sharon likes Guz very much.

Ask Sarah during the composing of this selection what she will write next and she replies, "Wait and see" or "I don't know." Each sentence determines the next. She doesn't really have much of an advanced concept of the whole, other than to generally write about Guz and put a series of sentences under that topic.

## First Narratives and First Revisions of Information

As Sarah advances in her writing she begins to put more order, more time-links, in her writing. If Sarah were to write the first selection about "Guz" at a later stage she might write it like this:

I found a caterpillar on a leaf in our
    garden.
My mom and I brought him in the house
    and put him in a jar with holes
    in it.
Jessica, Audrey and Sharon came over
    to look at him.
They all likes Guz and we played with
    him.

Until there is some order to a selection, it is very difficult to entertain any idea of revising information. After receiving the selection, reacting to the specifics of Sarah's message, the teacher might do the following in conference: "Tell me Sarah, I noticed you put holes in the top of the jar. You had some reason for doing that. Can you tell me more about it?"

"Well, if you don't put holes in the top, he'll die," replied Sarah.

"Do you think that is important information?" asked her teacher.

Sarah may say "no", and that ends the possibility of revision at that moment. Sarah's teacher may still use the situation for teaching or evaluation by requesting, "Sarah, if you were to put the information about the holes in here, put your finger on where it would go." The teacher watches Sarah to see if she has to read from the beginning, puts her finger in the correct location without extensive rereading, or cannot locate where the information belongs. The request does two things: (1) If Sarah can find the place, then she becomes aware that she can do it, and she is more likely to attempt it then (on her own) or at a later date. (2) It shows the teacher Sarah's readiness for revision. Lucy Calkins in her revision data shows that the simple step of locating where information belongs is more advanced than may be realized for beginning writers.

The genre has something to do with the ease with which children can place their new information. When children attempt to recall information in a personal narrative, they have a much stronger sense of chronology, as well as of the missing information. The next easiest is in fantasy or fiction, where the child must recall imagined information and locate in their own contrived stories the proper place for the data. Many children can do this but it is usually more difficult than in personal narrative. In the content areas where the order is determined by the logical relationships of information, the teask is even more difficutl.

Should Sarah be able and interested in adding the new information, two new developmental issues arise: the mechanics of data insertion and the aesthetics attendent to the act. Unless Sarah has skipped lines, there will be no more room for the addition in the draft. The other option is to make a mark or asterick in the desired location and writing the information at the top of the page. But Sarah may not like the appearance of crossing out or the drawing of arrows to place new information on the page. For some children the issue of aesthetics alone is reason for not wanting to revise. If Sarah were able to insert the information she may have done it in the following way:

> *We made holes so he wouldn't die.
>
> I found a caterpillar on a leaf in our garden.  
> My Mom and I brought him in the house and put him in a jar with holes in it.  
> Jessica, Audrey and Sharon came over to look at him.  
> They all liked Guz and we played with him.

Lucy Calkins has shown that children at this stage often point to the end of the selection as the place to add the new information. It is not unusual for children to do this up through the age of eight. The easiest place to revise is when the new information is added at the beginning or end of the piece.

## Revision as Addition of Information

The most common form of revision is the addition of information. Children also find the addition of information the easiest way to begin to revise. The need to add information is common to writers of all ages. Susan Sowers found in her analysis of freshman writers that the most common issues discussed in conference were the student's need for more information. How hard it is for the writer to have enough distance on self, text, or information in order to see what is needed.

There is a stage in childrens' production of narrative when the narrative is too complete, the story overtold. The writer has included an overly-detailed chronology. That is, the writer has included many details, from the time the writer gets up in the morning, until going to bed in the evening. In this instance the child may be writing about "A Wedding," or "Lost on a Mountain," but can only arrive at the central action by starting out from home, sharing the story, and then returning home. It is the fictional counterpart of "Once Upon a Time . . . and they all lived happily ever after." It is a necessary, stylized way of starting and ending the personal narrative. One child stated another option to the "bed to bed story": "Whenever I need more to write, I just start a new day."

Young children are not the only persons who "lead in" to the main subject through ritualistic preliminaries. In warming to my subject, I often find a three paragraph lead or even three to four pages before I grasp a subject. Of course, readers shouldn't have to suffer through my calisthenics. My friend, Donald Murray, has saved many readers by asking me what the article is about. The question alone is usually enough to jog me into sensibility. When he thinks I need more blunt advice he says, "The article starts here. The first three pages can go."

The "bed to bed" story shows equal value and space has been given to all story components. There is as much getting up in the morning as there is the report of the central action, the subject of the narrative. Until children can value one part of the story over another, and know how to heighten meaning through the exclusion and reorganization of information, they do not move to the next level of development in revision.

## VALUING INFORMATION

Children are able to speak of "values" in their selection when they first enter school. The teacher asks the child to "show me the part you like best." Thus, the readiness for using valuing at a much later time has been built into the conference from the beginning.

The writer's stage now under discussion is the valuing children do with a view to heightening one part of a selestion over another. This not only involves more advanced reading skills, the adequate provision of information by the child, but the writer's growing view that information can be manipulated, changed around, lined out (but mostly at the line level). Information and words are seen as malleable, clay-like.

The "bed to bed" example used in Chapter Five is now shown with a view to making the transition from equal value in information units to heightening one part of a piece with the ultimate view to excluding information or reordering the selection.

> We got up early in the morning to go to Northampton. Mom said we better eat a big breakfast because there wouldn't be anything to eat until the reception. I got my clothes all laid out, then put them into the suitcase When my Dad started the car it wouldn't go. Mom said, "Oh no, not again." They had a big argument. My Dad banged around and it started. We got there just in time for the wedding. There were all kinds of cars. My cousin got them parked in the right place. We sat next to my other cousin, Kathy. The music played and Aunt Ruth came down the aisle. She was beautiful. She had on a jeweled band across the front and the gown went down behind her. My other little cousin walked behind her to see that nothing happened to it. They got married and she and my new Uncle Tom kissed. Then they came down the aisle and they were smiling. Then we had a reception. You could hardly move there. There was lots to eat. I had cake, ice cream and pop. Then more ice cream. It was so hot I had to eat lots of ice cream and coke too. My Dad said, "We've got to go now," and my Mom said let's stay. My Dad won and we got into the car. It was a long trip. It was dark when we got home. My Mom said we didn't need anything to eat because we ate so much junk. What a day! I went to bed about ten o'clock.

Valuing is closely connected with the child's intentions. If intentions are strong, with the child wanting to make an impact on classmates, or tell about a particular aspect of the wedding, then there is a strong readiness for help with an examination of the child's values in the piece.

The teacher wonders, "Just what is the child's real interest in this selection?" There is a good account of observation, with perceptive accounts of parent interactions. The wedding is dull in comparision to the beginning and end of the selection. Or, is the writer more interested in Aunt Ruth? The teacher wants to help the writer see the important parts for herself, independent of the teacher's opinion of the selection. The teacher may ask one or two of several types of questions in this context:

1. What did you have in mind when you wrote this account of the wedding? What did you want to show? (This question works best, of course, if the topic has been chosen by the child.) Why did you choose this topic?
2. What part did you like best? (Usually asked after the child has read the selection outloud. Until the child hears her own voice tasting the words, she may not know.)
3. What will interest your readers most?
4. Read the one line that tells most what this piece is about.

If the conference reveals the child's main interest is the part about Aunt Ruth, then the teacher may try to bring out further information and heighten the importance of the Aunt Ruth section.

Exclusion of Information

Excluding information comes even later in a child's development. It is a long time before any writer wants to spontaneously delete information. The child may have heightened information about one part, yet still not be ready to remove other portions that now fade in importance. The association of length and quality lasts on up through doctoral dissertations.

There is a time, however, when the concept of information and language economy does take hold. Not too long after children view their information, themselves, and the process with distance, they are secure enough to say, "That has to go." Or, "What did I ever put that in for?" The order of development is still the same as in other levels, first the child does this with teacher help and then does it independently.

Figure ___ shows the relative emergence of many of the behaviors in revision. The list is not exhaustive and only gives a general picture of how children deal with information. Perhaps the greatest value of the figure is to show some of the ingredients involved in children's use of information for revision. It is important to note that children first use revision steps with help, and then independently. What doesn't show is the size of the unit under revision. Obviously the change, addition or deletion of an entire paragraph unit would usually come later than the change of a sentence.

PLACE FIGURE ___ HERE

## DEALING WITH MORE THAN ONE TEXT

John has already written a draft and decides to write another one. He wants to make the second draft better than the first. His teacher watches. She is surprised to find that John turns the first draft face down and writes the second draft disregarding the first.

At first many children cannot deal with two space-time dimensions, two papers at the same time, and therefore work on the second disregarding the first. John doesn't really revise, he just starts a new paper on the same subject. When John finally uses the other draft he merely revises at the point of mechanics: changes in spelling, handwriting and puncutaion. There is no change in information; there are merely touchups to make the paper more cosmetically acceptable. This is the center of John's values on the writing process.

Lucy Calkins, who has done this important work of checking children's revisions, shows that John then moves into a different stage of revision. John shows us the new stage in some restless, disturbing behaviors. He starts to write, puts down two lines, then tears the paper up. From a conceptual standpoint it is most important that John is now disturbed by his information. The words don't carry the intended meaning. John will even get up and walk around the room or pester neighbors. It is important that John is now writing a paper of topical significance to him. Our data show that when children write about a topic they know, have learned to choose good topics, the first important restlessness appears about information.

John finally makes the major breakthrough on revision when he sees the words as temporary, the information as manipulable. Now he is able to deal with several drafts simultaneously. John shows in his writing just how changeable things are by doing some of the following: he no longer erases or rubs words out; instead, he lines out. When information needs to be moved, he puts in symbols and arrows or writes up margins to insert information into the text. Calkins characterizes these writers as capable of "going back and forth" in their writing. That is, they are able to use information from one draft to include in the next, to reorganize and place a paragraph on page three of one draft and move it up to page one. The critical factor is that until the children see information as primary, the details as essential to good communication, they are unable to see information, words, or syntax as manipulable.

## VOICE AND OWNERSHIP

The main focus of this chapter has been on developmental factors that affect children's visions of what they do in the writing process. It has sought to answer questions about the order of children's development as revisers. It can never be forgotten, however, that the force of revision, the energy for revision, is rooted in the child's voice, the urge to express. Every teacher has heard the words, "Do I have to do it over? Why do I have to write?" These children are saying: "I don't have a voice. I don't see the sense in what I am doing." The purpose of conferences, of following the children, of listening to their oral reading, of taking them back to the original reason for writing their selection, is to keep them in touch with the energy source for writing. Most writers, once they have overcome the initial problems of inertia and the terror of the blank page, break into a surge of more abundant writing.

Revision, or reseeing is not necessarily a natural act. It draws on a different source of energy, the enrgy of anticipation. The carpenter planes, sands, varnishes and sands again, all in anticipation of running the hand over the smooth surface, the pleasure to the eye of gently curving lines, the approval of friends. The carpenter has been there before, knows what will be coming, and trusts his ability to solve the problems along the way.

Children need to write every day and have response to their voices, know what comes through that they might anticipate self-satisfaction, the vision of the imprint of their information on classmates, the vision of their work in published form. It is the forward vision, as well as the backward vision, that ultimately leads to the major breakthroughs in a child's writing.

## 2. The Researcher Who Watches Children Write

*Susan Sowers*

'HERE'S YOUR BACON BURGER, DR GRAVES,' Chris says to the man with the clipboard at the first grade math area. The children count and solve arithmetic problems with miniature bacon, eggs, strawberries, and brown and white cookies. Chris has turned it into a restaurant.

'I don't see a bacon burger on the menu. Is this something that is not on the menu?' Graves asks. Chris goes to get paper and a stapler.

Graves, a bald, middle-aged professor, sits with surprising ease on a chair whose tiny seat is twelve inches above the floor. Chris has brown hair and a missing front tooth. He has won his classmates' admiration for his lively plans and games, but their bids for his approval of a clay submarine and a skyscraper in blocks don't delay him long.

'Tusdays special,' the seven-year-old writes on a small square of paper. On another he writes, 'apple soup' and 'Todays special Bacon Burger.'

'You know, taxes are going up, too,' says Chris. He staples the specials to the menu he had written yesterday.

'Now, what do you want to eat?' Chris asks.

'I'd like a bacon burger and a cup of coffee, but I don't see any coffee on the menu.'

Chris adds coffee. 'Would you like an appetiser? How about strawberries?'

Graves quizzes him on the price of strawberries before he agrees to order them as an appetiser.

'OK,' Graves says, 'how much will all this cost?'

'The coffee and appetiser go with the meal. It will all cost one dollar,' says Chris.

'How do I pay for all of this?' Graves asks.

'Write a cheque.'

Graves hands his cheque to Chris. '"Pay to the order of Snack Place. One dollar and no cents. D.H. Graves,"' Chris reads with hesitation.

When Mrs Giacobbe's first grade class goes to lunch, Graves takes Chris's menu from his cubby and the stories that Laura, Ann, and Shannon had written that morning to xerox at the school office.

Chris's customer at Snack Place is Professor Donald H. Graves of the University of New Hampshire. Chris is one of sixteen children Graves and his research associates Lucy Calkins and Susan Sowers will observe for the next two years to learn how children change in their writing processes. The writing process is new territory in research which Graves' award-winning doctoral dissertation in 1973 helped to open.

Graves stopped in the teachers' room to tell Mary Ellen Giacobbe, who had been too busy with a group of children to overhear, and Jean Robbins, the principal, about his conversation with Chris. He talked with his hands and laughed with the delight he had suppressed while talking to Chris.

'Then I said to Chris, "Isn't ten cents awfully cheap for strawberries this time of year? How can you make a profit?"

'And he said, "It's alright. We raise our own strawberries."

'"But what about the cost of fertiliser and your own labor?" I said.

'"We don't buy fertiliser. We do it the natural way," he told me.

'"What about the cost of plants?" But I couldn't stump him!

'"We had to buy plants the first year. Strawberry plants send out runners with new plants, so we don't have to buy any more."'

Giacobbe, Robbins, and the other teachers shook their heads with astonishment and laughed with Graves at seven-year-old Chris's wide knowledge and unshakable poise.

Graves chose Atkinson Academy as the site for his study because Robbins and her staff are an open, cooperative group of professionals who are genuinely interested in helping children. Most important, children *do* write at Atkinson. Grammar exercises are not accepted as a substitute as is the case in more and more schools.

A brass plaque in front of Atkinson Academy states that it was built in 1803. Although 'Academy' is part of its name, the school serves Atkinson, New Hampshire, formerly a small New England town and now a bedroom community for Boston commuters.

The oldest part of the building has two classrooms on each of its two floors. The roof is topped by a cupola. The flagpole that extends from the second storey is not aluminum but a thin, nearly-straight wooden pole. Like many old houses in New England towns, Atkinson Academy grew because its later occupants needed more space and built several additions behind the original white wooden building.

About a quarter of a mile down the road past the Atkinson Grange and a few houses stands Rockwell, a brick building that houses three more classrooms. Graves and his research associates follow children in two classrooms at Rockwell and three in the main building.

Chris is not a typical first grade child. He, like the other fifteen children in the first and third grades, was not chosen at random to be the subject of an experiment. Chris was selected for his unique characteristics. He is a very bright, developmentally advanced first grade boy. Graves and Calkins observed the five classes for several weeks before deciding which children would provide the most data at different levels of development—advanced, average, and slow—in the first and third grades.

Graves' use of the case study method includes close observation and interviews. His conversation with Chris in the restaurant was an exploration. While Chris wrote, Graves recorded what he said and did in a double column form which he designed in a previous study:

| *Words Written by Child* | *Observer Comments* |
|---|---|
| Tusdays Sp ecial<br>(1) (2) (3) | (2) Writes 'sp' quickly. |
| | (3) Chris: 'How do you spell special?' Spelling is given. |
| apple soup<br>(4) (5) (6) | (4) Chris comments, 'You know, taxes are going up, too.' |
| | (5) Chris: 'How do you spell soup?' Researcher: 'You know how to spell that word.' Chris writes. |
| | (6) Chris takes this writing, done on coloured paper about 4" x 4", and staples the 'special' to main menu. |
| Todays Special<br>(7) (8) | (7) Voices as he writes Todays. |
| | (8) Copies 'Special' from word written on previous ticket. Makes several trips to get it right. |
| Bacon burger<br>(9) (10) | (10) Writes and sounds two letters at a time when he copies this word from the other menu. |
| | (11) Chris: 'What do you want to eat?' Researcher: 'I'd like a bacon burger and a cup of coffee, but I don't see any coffee on the menu.' |
| coffee<br>(12) (13) (14) | (12) Chris writes 'coffee' on main menu. |

(13) Chris: 'Would you like an appetiser? How about strawberries?' Researcher: 'OK'.

(14) Researcher: 'How much will all this cost?' Chris: 'The coffee and appetiser go with the meal. It will all cost one dollar.'

This writing episode, when placed beside others that precede it and follow it will show changes in Chris's writing process. For instance, Chris used resources four times in his nine-word episode: twice, in 3 and 5, he asked Graves for a spelling word; and twice, in 8 and 10, he referred to words already written. Chris voiced the words as he wrote or sounded the letters in 7 and 10. Chris's behaviour in the writing process occupies Graves' attention far more than the written product with accidents such as a missing apostrophe and misspelling in 'Tuesday'.

Chris's behaviour shows that he knows a lot about restaurants — the way menus and specials are displayed, a single price for the meal, appetiser, and coffee incidentally avoiding the problems of adding up a cheque, and knowing that people can pay with cheques. His comment on taxes, 'You know, taxes are going up, too,' is certainly appropriate for a proprietor of a small restaurant whether he means his property taxes or that food, too, is rising in price.

After recording Chris's play and writing at The Snack Place, Graves summarised his observations: 'Chris is widening his writing vocabulary through the store. He has an excellent understanding of meal components. The attachments as special tickets to the main menu are quite sophisticated, especially his use of the word appetiser.

'About five minutes later—after the researcher had left—I overheard Chris say to Allen, "I'm sick of this, let's do something else."

'Note: Chris ends highly involved episodes abruptly. When things are done, they are *done*. This still indicates that Chris does things for the *doing;* they are ends in themselves, not necessarily for use at another time, although he did use yesterday's menu, and the study of whales has gone on for at least a week and one half. An issue: transitions.'

Graves' summary shows Chris's writing in the context of other events. In the prewriting or rehearsal stage, Chris learned about restaurants, taxes, and how strawberries grow. He played restaurant in the math area the day before. As Graves observed, Chris writes for the moment. An audience distant in time and space is not yet important to Chris. When it is, he will begin to revise and edit — the third stage of the writing process.

Each influence in Chris' writing is a variable. In his proposal to the National Institute of Education for funding for the two-year project, Graves listed thirty-five variables that he hoped to follow in the study: '... the purpose of case study investigation is to locate new variables. Previous experience with two other case study investigations shows that half again as many new questions or variables are uncovered,' he wrote in the proposal.

To show the importance of case study research, Graves cites Piaget's breakthroughs studying his own three children and Dr John Laragh's case study research leading to advances in treating hypertension. 'But the work has to be meticulous and done over time,' Graves warns. 'When a child took the Binet (an I.Q. test) and gave all the wrong answers, Piaget asked, "Why did he do that?" Every piece of information is information. If the child does something unpredictable, happy day! In teaching we can't be threatened. We ask, "What are we going to do with that?"

'It's presumptuous to make statements about how children develop without observation. Ken Goodman and Yetta Goodman got to know kids. They could see why they were reading the way they were reading. Observation leads to being responsive. They have a way of caring about children. Their research model was a responsive model which leads to responsive teaching. We've had so much unresponsive research. I hope research might be compatible with the way in which findings might be carried out.'

Graves' knowledge of children showed research associate Calkins what children struggle with. After the first day observing the children she said, 'I went into one room where all the children were copying from page 213 of their math books. I walked around the room wondering, 'What am I supposed to do here?' I noticed that some added the hundreds column before the tens and ones. I shifted my weight and looked around and wondered if that was what I'm supposed to see.

'Then I talked to Don [Graves] about the room in the car on the way back. He was excited. "Wasn't that incredible?" he said. He'd noticed so much about the children that I'd missed. He said, "Did you see how one child sat on a short chair at a high table and was writing math problems at armpit level? Did you notice the angles of the papers to the children's bodies? Think how that changes their perspective on the math book and what that does to copying and writing. Some children had to voice the problems in order to write them, and some had to look at the book, write a digit, look back for the next digit, write it, find their place in the book and so forth until they copied the problem one digit at a time." He even noticed the pencils. One child wrote with a stubby pencil which made his writing small and cramped.'

Graves' ability to help teachers see children only begins with conversations. He writes about his research so that other will see what children do, too. Here is his description of the child whom he observed for his doctoral dissertation:

> I was startled by the sound of machine gun fire from the rear. Quickly I turned . . . and noted that seven-year-old Michael was writing again. He would gaze at his drawing of warfare between Germans and Americans at the top of his paper, reach up and crayon in a red explosion for emphasis, and with shooting noises escaping from his lips return to the written description of his private war. Although classified

> as a reader at the pre-primer level, Michael struggled with an average of three unassigned writings per day, yet apparently enjoyed the full process of writing.

Graves loves to tell stories. 'Conversation has always been a prize to me. Finding a person and picking them for all they're worth. You start with questions to see where they're going to end up. Especially in airports. If you can just get people to talk about themselves. That's what you do in a case study. I try to get someone's story.'

Graves also loves to act. When he teaches a graduate course in Foundations of Early Childhood Education, he spends part of each week impersonating the philosopher the class studies from Benjamin Franklin to Tolstoy to Piaget. Graves taught a course at the University of Vermont last summer for teachers called Understanding the Individual Writer. The writing process—the problem solving process that children, adults, and professional writers go through when they write—was the subject of the course. One student said, 'He literally showed us what kids do when they write. He sat there with one knee on the chair, his pencil in his fist, sounding out words. He even tore the paper with his pencil. He looked just like a little kid.'

When she went back to the classroom, she viewed her young authors with heightened appreciation and knew helpful ways to respond to them.

Graves watches and reflects on Chris and the other children. The research team compiles and analyses about twenty pages of data daily as they look for answers to questions and for questions they have not yet asked.

I asked Graves what he hoped to learn from this study.

'One, is to get a sense of sequences in which children learn to write, to see how much a child's development influences the writing process, to try to find out new components of the writing process, to come up with new questions. So little work has been done on the writing process. What does handwriting do for spelling and what do handwriting and spelling do for the writing process? And what does the writing process do for handwriting and spelling?

'This is not in the proposal—how can we help children and teachers in writing?'

'What are some things you've learned so far?' I asked.

Graves answered with a list of issues that would surprise an educational researcher, but not an anthropologist. Like an anthropologist who observes in the natural setting, Graves sees the tools of the first or third grade classroom as important. Tools are as much a part of the process as any other component. Writing is not done entirely in the author's head.

'Some things are little barriers. One, in the area of revision, just the mechanical problems involved in erasing a word. The labour —putting the writing on top of a black, smudged spot. You say, "Too bad they don't have materials that let them do that easily." Or with an older child, the dilemma of crossing out words or drawing arrows to another section to change the order or add new information. The child may think the teacher is the only person who can write on the paper. The dilemma of changing, scratching out. In time the child realises writing is clay and can be changed, and they do that. Children go into a plateau when they think the words are magic and unchangeable.'

Graves has observed children's impulses to change their original products. 'Art work, sequences of action. Both illustrations and writing deal with problems of space and time, how to represent them. How do you solve the problems of tools? Words are fixed in time and unchangeable. When children get dissatisfied, you can tell uneasiness. They are re-reading.

'I asked Carrie, a first grader, what would happen on the next page. First she said, "Wait and see." That was a cover-up. She didn't know. Then she said, "I don't know." Finally she said, "I guess I better think about it." She must think that's what you do when you don't know. I thought at the end of one page she was done. Then she started to draw furiously. I have a strong suspicion I threw her into rehearsing by asking those questions. A tree with a hole in it ended up, "The owl is home now."'

Carrie was working on a book of six pages of lined newsprint with unlined space at the top for drawing. It had a construction paper cover. 'This is an uneasiness I have about books too soon,' Graves said, relating tools to the writing process. 'Writing gets disjointed, writing just to fill up the book. When you turn the page, it's more difficult to relocate in time and space. It's a physical barrier the child has to overcome to go on to the next step, to get fluency. They have to be familiar enough with the process to change it. You don't get healthy unrest when something is brand new. When there's distance, there's something beyond what's mechanical and written at the moment.'

Months have passed since Chris wrote his menu for Snack Place, and Chris has overcome his reluctance to write anything longer or more complex than a menu. He wrote an eighteen-page book on *Star Wars*. Other titles include *Watership Down, Chemicals, The Moon, All About Aquariums, School,* and *The Sea*. Two have been published for the class library. Today he chose the best of his books and ranked the others. His criteria for good writing and his closely observed behaviour during the writing process will help other teachers see how to help their students develop as writers.

# The Craft of Writing

### by Lucy McCormick Calkins

*From first revision to final draft, children discover that using words well is hard but rewarding work*

A large plastic robot greeted me at the door to Room 123. "He's mine," eight-year-old Michael said. "Me and Jonathan are interviewing about him."

A nearby table was draped with fishing poles, lures and reams of photographs from Chris' vacation. "They're asking me about my trip," Chris explained. "Then I am going to write about it."

Two girls sat against the back wall, half buried under a coat rack. "I'm going to write about this bird's nest," Andrea said, "and Becky's going to help me know what I have to say."

Pat Howard, a third-grade teacher in Atkinson, N.H., explains, "This year I started off writing class by asking my students to bring tangible bits of their lives to school." Soon the once-empty shelves in Room 123 became a display case for baseball cards, models, even a fish with a blue-green fin. Maps of summer trips and family photographs replaced commercial displays on dental care and autumn.

Howard's children no longer hide behind the excuse, "I don't have anything to write about." Nor can they just dash off a few quick lines about a dictated topic by their teacher. Instead, they have the opportunity—and the responsibility—to write about what they know.

Howard has found that once Jonathan, Chris, Andrea and other students discover that they have something worth writing about, they will want to write as well as possible. As they reach for the words to make their experiences real and clear, children learn what many professional writers know: writing is making choices, writing is deliberate, writing is a craft.

Long before any serious writer picks up the pen to write, he or she must make choices. During the pre-

continued

[illegible]

writing stage writers sort through the raw stuff of their lives, searching for a bunch of a topic, a hint of an ending. They list ideas, jot down memories, sketch the tangibles they want to write about. A topic begins to emerge, often wordless at first.

### Is It Worth Writing About?

When Andrea brought her bird's nest to school, she did not have a clear idea of why it seemed worth writing about. Only when she crawled behind the coats to be interviewed by her friend did she begin the writer's process of selecting her meaning.

"Where'd you get the bird's nest?" Becky asked Andrea. "Under a tree," Andrea answered bluntly. Becky tried again. "Was there any feathers or egg shells near it?" "No."

Howard peered through the coats to where Andrea and Becky were quietly talking. "Can I come in? she asked. The girls pushed a puffy parka aside so their teacher could squish into the hideout. Howard listened for a few minutes as Becky and Andrea searched to find the "something that matters." She tried a different tack. "Andrea," she said, "What made you decide to bring in the bird's nest?" The question made Andrea stop. "Well," Andrea answered after a few minutes, "it's because I've always been interested in birds ever since I was little, and wanted to fly." A few minutes later, Andrea was quickly spilling words on to her paper. Here is what she wrote:

> *Kaboom! That hurts. Why can't I fly? Birds can. I climbed onto my bed, and flapped my wings even harder. It didn't work. Later, my Dad said, "Close your eyes, and spread out your arms." He slipped something onto my arms." When I opened my eyes, I saw two beautiful cardboard wings my father had made for me.*

"In the interviews, the children discover their lives are worth writing about," says Howard. "They come to me in early September, believing only big things and make-believe things are interesting. Before, writing meant desperately trying to conjure up a new *Star Wars* story or to rewrite a hair-raising bank robbery tale they had seen on television."

Even after Michael was interviewed about his toy robot, he still wrote this:

> *Thunder Tom is King of the Robots.*
> *One day there was a robot battle*

"This is OK," Howard said when she heard Michael's story. "But why don't you write the truth about your robot?" After she had asked Michael some questions and listened to his answers, he launched into a detailed account of how he "won" Thunder Tom by getting good grades. Children at the next table looked up from their ice-fishing story and listened. "I never knew the true stuff was so interesting," Michael said, as he began his paper once again.

This time he wrote a few words, then crossed them out. His forehead furrowed. "It's harder to write for true," he said. "Before, the words didn't matter too much. But now, well, it's not fair to say my Dad *bribed* me into getting good grades, but it wasn't exactly a *reward* either." While he chewed his pencil, Howard moved on to help another child begin to make writer's choices.

**". . . writers sort through the raw stuff of their lives, searching for a bunch of a topic, a hint of an ending. They list ideas, jot down memories, sketch the tangibles they want to write about. A topic begins to emerge, often wordless at first."**

Chris was still rambling through an epilogue about his fishing trip. As he droned on, Amy fiddled with her hair, her eyes roaming the classroom, enviously eavesdropping on other interviews. Howard put her hand on Chris' shoulder. "Chris," she said, "what was the most interesting moment of the whole trip?" Chris' eyes lit up. "When I fell into the water!"

Chris' excitement was contagious. Amy sat forward in her seat. "You have a photograph of that, don't you?" she asked.

While they laughed together at the picture, Howard took the other photographs, plus an armload of fishing gear, and stuffed them in her closet. "Try focusing on just one picture," she suggested, and left them to work.

Andrea, Michael and Chris learned to write because they first realized that they had something worthwhile to say. B child can be an authority on somethi Chris fell into the river. Andrea always wanted to fly. Michael earned toy robot. These are the topics child will write about.

### Do's and Don'ts

One afternoon in mid-October How asked her class to brainstorm in orde develop a list of do's and don'ts for g topics. This is the list:

| *Do* | *Don't* |
|---|---|
| Write about something you care about. | Don't write ab things that are b ing to you. |
| Start off with action, with the here-and-now. | Don't write ab something y haven't done yet. |
| Choose just one part or aspect of your topic. | Don't keep going it gets worse a worse. Don't pic topic that's too b for you to detail. |

Howard then asked the children to topics they might want to write abo This is Andrea's list of 10 writing top After she wrote them, she reread the cl list of *Do's and Don'ts*. Then she w back to her topics, and focused each c by adding brief, specific details in pare theses.

Animals (bears)
Camping (in Canada—the deer I sa
Fishing (with Daddy—last summer)
Hiking (on the mountains)
Taking Care of My Dog (giving her th heartworm pill)
Art (at home, with my sister)
Swinging (on the swing set my fathe built)
The Spooky House
My Tree House (I had to tear down)
Badminton (with my sister, who's a poor player)

Some children need to explore an focus their topic through more concre ways than interviewing or listing top choices. This is true for some eight- an nine-year-olds and for most five- and six year-olds. Darron, a first grader, places a sheet of paper on the table and picks u his pencil.

"What are you going to write about Darron?" his teacher asks. "How should I know? I haven't drawn it yet," he answers.

Soon Darron has drawn the airplane father taught him to make several weeks ago. The airplane flies over each picture Darron draws. Beneath it, he pencils in the standard gum-drop animal-shape he often uses. "Hmmmmm. What animal should it be?" he says, looking at the animal he has drawn. "I know, a tiger."

Darron adds stripes to his animal, growling as he draws. "Hey, I know, this plane is shooting the tiger!" Soon Darron is ready to write.

Children can prepare to write in many different ways. Dawn creates a dance about loneliness. She quietly curls her body into lonely shapes. Then she stops nd sits very still. "I have a poem," she s, and on a bit of paper she writes s:

*Alone*
*Sadness reaches for me*
*Folding happy into sad*
*Making me feel*
*Sorry for myself.*

Dawn and Darron have each made important choices during the prewriting part of the writing process. They've begun to think about questions, such as these:

- Am I worth listening to?
- What do I have to say?
- What information do I have to communicate?
- What really happened?
- How shall I begin?
- What questions will my reader want me to answer?

**The Messy Craft**

The writer's craft is a messy one. He or needs to carve meaning from ess of detail—drafting and redrafting, ssing out some words and adding others. Helping children understand the idea that writing is not a neat, precise process was Howard's goal when she first composed in front of her students. "It was scary," she says, "because I hadn't written much since college. I began with an interview, thinking that might help me." When the children arrived at school that morning, they found their desks pushed against the wall with a ring of chairs facing the chalkboard. Alongside the chalkboard Howard had hung three large X-ay pictures. Two new pieces of chalk and children waited.

"Today, class," she said, "I have . . . . . . well, I have a story." Howard shed her hair away from her face. She k a deep breath and stepped up to the lkboard. She turned around a few es, as if disoriented, aware of the eyes ed to her. She looked strangely out of ce, where usually she fit so naturally. d like us to write the story together," she said. "But first you must interview me."

Soon the children were pumping their teacher with questions.

"Does it have anything to do with those X-rays?" Kurt asked.

"Yes," Howard said, relaxing.

"Is that *you* in those X-rays?" Wendy wondered.

"No, it's my dog."

"What happened to him?"

The children inched their chairs closer and closer to their teacher. They listened, captivated by her story.

Their teacher listened, too. She then began to believe in what she had to say. The room was still as Howard grasped the chalk. She thought for a minute, then turned to write her story on the chalkboard.

**"Children can prepare to write in many different ways. Dawn creates a dance about loneliness. She quietly curls her body into lonely shapes. Then she stops and sits very still. 'I have a poem,' she says. . . ."**

*My dog fell out of the truck and broke her leg.*

She stepped back and looked at her words. "No, that's dull." She drew a line through her first lead. For a moment she was quiet, reviewing the memory of her experience. "Perhaps I should start it this way":

*Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Sheba fall from the back of the truck . . . .*

Shawn is the first to comment. "I like the way you begin with just one detail. We can see it happen." Wendy wonders exactly what Howard saw. "Was it the whole dog or just like a bit of fur?"

The children's questions led their teacher back to the experience. As they struggled together for the words to convey their meaning, they began to see more clearly, to perceive more honestly. They learned that words are malleable.

**Other Beginnings, Other Drafts**

A few weeks later Becky brought in the carefully-penned beginning to an article. She and her teacher read it together.

*I walked up to the pond. I wanted to catch something like a catfish, or something. I went to the other side of the pond . . . .*

"This is a good try, Becky," Howard said. Then, with a felt-tip pen, she drew a dark green line under Becky's opening. "Try another beginning, OK?"

Becky's mouth gaped. "But, but . . ." she started to say. She scowled as she looked at her perfect paper ruined by a dark slash of green. Then, shrugging her shoulders, she wrote another beginning.

*I sat down on the rock. I put my hand in the water. Fish gathered around. The catfish charged at my bait. He bit it, and swam away.*

Becky read what she had written aloud. "It's better," she said, smiling. Howard agreed. Hugging Becky warmly, she drew another dark green line across the page. "See if you can do another one."

Becky reread her openings, numbering them as she finished each one. Then she slowly drew a number three.

*3. I felt a tug! It was a catfish.*

"I'm going to use this lead as my opening," Becky said. Back at her seat, she showed her paper to Amy. Soon Amy was writing leads, while Becky encouragingly slashed green lines under each. The concept of leads spread quickly, as the children helped each other.

"What's your main point?" they asked, echoing their teacher. "Let's read it and listen to hear where it picks up speed." Soon most of the children were experimenting with lead sentences.

**Helping With "Leads"**

Throughout the next week, Howard used many of the following methods to help her children with leads:

1. Make a copy of each child's leads. Arrange the children in groups to share their leads with each other and discuss which leads they liked best, and why.

2. Suggest that the class become an editorial board. A young writer submits a lead to the editors and they respond to it with specific questions and suggestions.

3. Ask children to look back to leads

continued

they wrote earlier. Some children may decide to rewrite earlier leads.

4. Call children's attention to leads in good books they are reading. How does an author "hook" his readers?

5. Have children examine their best lead. Is every word needed? Can they be more precise or clear?

As children write and rewrite their leads, they learn a process which they later can apply to a whole piece of writing. They write, and then stand back from what they have done—rereading, reconsidering, rewriting.

"The children and I have come to see first drafts as discovery drafts," Howard says. She doesn't correct first drafts because "I don't want them to worry about spelling and mechanics at this stage. It's the content that matters first. Later we look at language. Then still later, we work on mechanical problems."

She does more than listen to first drafts. She follows each word, pictures each detail and turns each idea over in her head. "Will you read that part again, Chris, slowly," she'll ask. "I need to think about it." "I'm not sure I can picture where you are in this, Susie. Are you fishing from a boat or from the dock?"

Many times Howard's questions help the writers discover their focus. "What do you like best in this piece of writing?" she'll ask, and then suggest that the child build on this strength. "Underline the section which seems most important to you."

The children go back to their papers, reconsider their subject and discover their content. They often want to add more to their story. They now see a finished draft as a beginning, not an end.

## Revising

Andrea describes revision this way:

> *When you want to fix up a paper, you have to think back and remember what really happened. And then you have to keep reading and reading what is on your paper, and try to think how you can fit the real thing onto paper so it'll sound good and make sense.*

Andrea is an advanced third grader, able to consider a whole variety of options as she writes. She deliberately selects the tone and pace of her piece, as well as the information and sequence. Other third graders in Andrea's class are at many different kinds and levels of revision. Howard helps each child take his or her revision work one step at a time.

Learning to revise is an organic, personal process. It is not unlike learning to think, question and research. Children will grow into the writing process if given the opportunity to experiment and the encouragement to fail and try again.

For Andrea, as for all writers, editing is the final part of the writing process. Finally she is ready to polish her paper word by word. Howard says, "Sometimes the children like to use red pens instead of the ordinary pencil."

Each writer becomes his or her own editor. With a cold, critical eye, the child reads what he or she has written and rewritten, cutting every word that can be cut, making every abstract statement more concrete, every generalization more specific. Troublesome spellings are fixed, punctuation is corrected. Finally, the big moment comes—the final draft.

## The Reward

Children who write and rewrite to respect themselves and their Teachers who write—and who children write—know final drafts d time and attention. They also deserv audience.

"This is my final draft," Rebecca A hush falls over the circle of chil The little girl begins to read.

> *I watched a drop of water trick down the vein of a leaf and pl onto the ground. Another form Fresh, clear, it ran to the tip of t leaf, and hung there, suspended.*
>
> *I stuck out my tongue. The dr wriggled gently from the leaf plipped onto my tongue. Its p smooth taste spread over mouth.*
>
> *Another bubble of dew form filling its place. It trembled, but not fall.*

For a minute, the room is quiet. breaks the silence. "You must be p Rebecca. It's beautiful."

Rebecca glows. "Yes," she says, was worth all those nine drafts."

Rebecca has learned the proce writing—and more. ◆

*Lucy McCormick Calkins has just co pleted work on a two-year study, fu by the National Institute of Educat on how children change in the writi composing process. A consultant in field of writing for schools and univ ties throughout the United States, has taught at the elementary and sec ary levels.*

### Suggestions for Revision

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. One or two children don't independently reread or reconsider their words or their mechanics. Writing is final, and for these children, it is extremely hard to put anything on paper at all. | **Suggestion:** These children can revise in other media. courage them to reread what they write. Questions such "What is your favorite part?" help them begin to look b |
| 2. Some children reread and correct their papers. They only make small editing changes, erasing rather than crossing out. They see each draft as a final copy. | **Suggestion:** Listen carefully as the child reads his or writing, and ask honest, real questions to help the writer l that the reader needs more information. Content revi begins as "adding on." Usually children first add on to the of their piece. Later, they add on to middle sections throu inserts. |
| 3. Some children independently recopy their pieces, a step ahead of the child who merely corrects the original paper. Once there are two drafts, handwriting and spelling can be relegated to a later stage in the process, and the child can worry about content and language only. Also, as the child recopies he or she often changes the original. | **Suggestion:** The next step is to learn to make the first draft into a working manuscript. Write all over it. Star it. Change it. Use it. |
| 4. Instead of viewing the second draft as a copy, the child begins to see it as a second try. Usually the child will at first disregard the first draft and do the second one "from scratch." | **Suggestion:** Encourage the child to use the first draft. "What did you learn from it?" "What needs to be cut? Saved? Changed?" Ask him or her to look first at the larger issues: content, sequence, focus—and then at language, word choice, precision. |

L.M.C.

# Punctuate! Punctuate? Punctuate.

Kids will do it right . . . if it makes sense.

BY. LUCY McCORMICK CALKINS

With masking tape, six-year-old Sharon carefully hangs the make-believe menu on the wall. Classmates cluster around and peer up at it together. "Wait a minute," Sharon says as she reads. " 'Baconburger 65.' We've got to add a money sign."

Nine-year-old Scott climbs the steps to his classroom two at a time. "My story today is going to be exciting," he says. "It's about cutting down trees." Scott picks up his pencil and whispers, "Boom." He writes the letters *b o o m*, then erases them. "Boom," he says again, louder, and writes the word in capitals. "How can I make it sound exciting?" he asks.

Across the room, Andrea scowls as she rereads her list of topics. "They're all too big," she sighs. "I have to make them smaller and more detailed." Beside *Canada*, she adds dashes, then parentheses: *Canada--(the deer we saw)*. Beside *Fishing*, she adds: *--(the biggest fish)*. Finally the list satisfies her and Andrea is ready to select a topic.

Andrea and Scott don't work with dittoed exercises on quotation marks or exclamation points. Their teacher doesn't try to squeeze 40 minutes out of each day for drill work on language mechanics. Instead she lets her children write.

The urge to tell leads Jason and Sarah to struggle with punctuation. "Where do the periods go?" "How can I make the wicked monster groan and yell?" When children write, they ask the questions; they raise the issues. They lead the way, and their teachers follow—watching, waiting, helping.

"Writing has changed the whole curriculum," Beth Hoban says. "Last year I divided language into little parts—punctuation, spelling, grammar, reading, letter-writing. I made up class lessons for everything, and spent my time trying to convince the children that workbooks were important."

The third grade across the hall from Beth Hoban's classroom still learns language this way. The children take a pretest, fill in some workbook pages and ditto sheets, take a post-test, then repeat the cycle with another round of grammar. Writing is the one thing they do very little of.

The goals in the two classes—call them the "mechanics" class and the "writing" class—are not dissimilar. Both teachers believe in basic skills. One teaches them in isolation; the other teaches them in context. One class studies punctuation through pretests, post-tests, exercises and drills. The other class studies punctuation through the writing process—writing, rewriting, editing and "publishing." Both teachers say, "I begin at the very beginning." For one, the beginning is the declarative sentence and the rules for using periods. For the other, the beginning is the child's experiences and the child's desire to relate these experiences to others.

But Beth Hoban's third graders—the writing class—learn punctuation more effectively.

This fact has been documented in a two-year study funded by the National Institute of Education and started in September 1978. Three full-time researchers observed the children in Hoban's class while they wrote every day. They also interviewed the children in both the writing and mechanics classes. "Do you like punctuation? What's it good for?" were among the questions the children were asked. Then each child was shown 14 different marks of punctuation. "What this for?" the researcher asked as she drew a semicolon, an apostrophe, or another of the marks. The third graders who worked with punctuation only when the need arose in a writing session could define/explain more than twice as many kinds of punctuation as the children who had studied punctuation through formal classwork, drills and tests.

"Punctuation lets you know where the sentence ends," Chip, one of the young writers, explains. "Otherwise, one minute you'd be sledding down the hill, and the next minute you're inside the house without even stopping." Becky adds, "Punctuation makes the action more real to me in my writing. Say you had 'wow,' and you just put it 'w-o-w' and a period after it. It doesn't sound like you're really saying it. But with an exclamation and quotations, it *sounds* real."

"At the beginning of the year," Chip recalls, "I didn't use any punctuation in my writing. It was hard for whoever was reading it to keep going and going without any periods." In Hoban's classroom, children often read one another's work in progress.

"Will you read my writing and tell me if it makes sense?" Dan asks his friend. The two climb under the coat rack together and Kelly begins to read the story in a loud whisper. She reads slowly, faltering over missing punctuation. "Read it better," Dan says. "Come on." But Kelly can't, not without punctuation. So they borrow the teacher's red pen and put periods, quotation marks and commas into the draft.

Dan knows his story will be read by classmates and by other writers in the school. He plans to share it with a first grade class that also writes and learns punctuation through writing.

Six-year-old Sunny, one of the first graders, says, "I like punctuations. They help you with your words." Another first grader in the room explains periods this way: "A period means the end of a story. You use it at the end of the book that you write, at the end of the page, too, or in the middle of a page, if you stopped there."

These two first graders and their classmates write every day and they write for each other.

When children write, and then reread what they have written to themselves, their classmates and their teacher, they want punctuation to give voice to their words. They want their print to speak out loud. When young children first tumble talk onto the page, their letters rise and fall, wind and cluster over the page. They darken important syllables and begin words with capitals. The lilt of spoken language becomes a jumble of visual contrasts, of capitals and small letters, darkened shapes and lighter ones. When the young child reads what he has written, the contrasts in his print seem to follow, vaguely, the rhythm and expression of his voice.

But print is not speech. And patches and strings of letters, big and small, loopy and tight, do not translate into another reader's voice. Scott's friend struggles over Scott's tree-cutting story, reducing the drama to a painful string of broken sounds. Scott sees this. How can he direct the letters *b-o-o-m* to vibrate into a loud *BOOM*? How can he make his reader's voice hang, expectantly, before a list of sound effects? Step by step Scott begins to invent, discover and adopt conventional marks that communicate the inflection and pace of his voice.

Peter was the first in his group to bring exclamation points to school. "Hey, look what my mother showed me!" Soon exclamations were spreading like wildfire across the room. At last the children had a substitute for the big, tall letters they'd used as first graders to show important words. Now Peter explains "explanation marks" like this: "Use them when, like, you yell, 'Get over here!' Then they'll know you are *talking serious*. I like using them because I like people shouting and I like writing big loud words."

Exclamation marks also spread through the first grade writing classroom. There, too, the children like the *sound* of them. Sunny says they make words sound "loud and mad." Ellen has a different idea. She refers to them as "happy marks."

Children develop a hierarchy of exclamation marks. An ordinary sentence receives one; more elaborate sentences receive two or more. "Once I filled the whole line up with them," one third grader admitted.

When children learn something new, they often overuse it. Later they will find a balance. Andrea, a more advanced writer, is now able to say, "Some stories need exclamations. Many don't. It depends on the mood you want."

Beth Hoban's writers use the sound of language to describe other types of punctuation as well. More than half her class explained the placement of periods by the way the writing sounds. Here are some of their explanations:

> CHIP: *As you read along in what you've written, you listen to your voice, and when it gets lower, that's where you put the period in.*
>
> GINNY: *I say what I'm going to write, and after each thing I say to myself, I put a period.*
>
> TERRY: *I listen and hear where I stop and put the period there.*

The mechanics students explaine the uses of punctuation by trying remember the rules they'd bee taught. They had learned that a perio comes at the end of a sentence. Bu when the researcher asked ther where to end a sentence, they didn know. "You can tell where to end it by the period," was all they could say.

In early September, Hoban's children wrote mostly in simple sentences, without dialogue, supportive information, sound effec or exclamations. They didn't put th ring of the alarm clock or the rustle leaves into their writing. And th didn't reread, rewrite, refocus and r vise in order to be clear. They *neede* only two or three different kinds punctuation to punctuate a piece writing correctly. Since then, the ch dren have learned to be more detail and precise in their writing.

"I try to think of exactly what ha

pened, to make a picture of it in my mind," eight-year-old Andrea says. "Then I can try for the words to put exactly what happened onto the paper."

Andrea writes these lines:

> *It was my birthday. Just then I was told to close my eyes. What's going on? I wondered. Finally I could open them and in front of me was a big box.*

Then she pulls back to read what she has written, her pencil poised over each word. "It'd sound more alive if I put it in her words," she says as she draws a line through her lead and rewrites:

> *Happy Birthday! My sister handed me a big box. Open it, she said.*

Again, she reads over her work, this time out loud. She adds quotation marks and continues to write:

> *"Open it," she said. I did. And in the box was a ball of fur with eyes!*

Andrea's eyes shift back over her words. With a caret she inserts *big* before the words *ball of fur*. "I have to work a long time on a little section," Andrea says, "or I can't get it right."

When children struggle to be clear and precise in their language, their writing and revising leads them to a variety of punctuation and proofreading marks. Carets, parentheses, asterisks and arrows help children sculpt their words. Through punctuation codes, they move language about on the page.

"Sometimes I have to make up my own signs," Andrea explains. "Yesterday when I reread my piece, I wanted to mark the words that maybe don't belong. I couldn't circle them, because for me circles are for spelling mistakes. So I put a box and a star around each word I needed to maybe cross out."

Writers find punctuation marks everywhere. They notice them on billboards, in magazines. Even if they have never used colons or parentheses, they are usually familiar with them. First grader Joshua has seen parentheses. "They are in my math book on the next page, coming up. I think it is regrouping." Third grade writers notice the colons in dictionaries, and the 's in their reading books. When asked to explain punctuation marks they didn't know, they usually answered, "I've seen them, but I don't really know what they mean. I only know the ones I've tried in my writing."

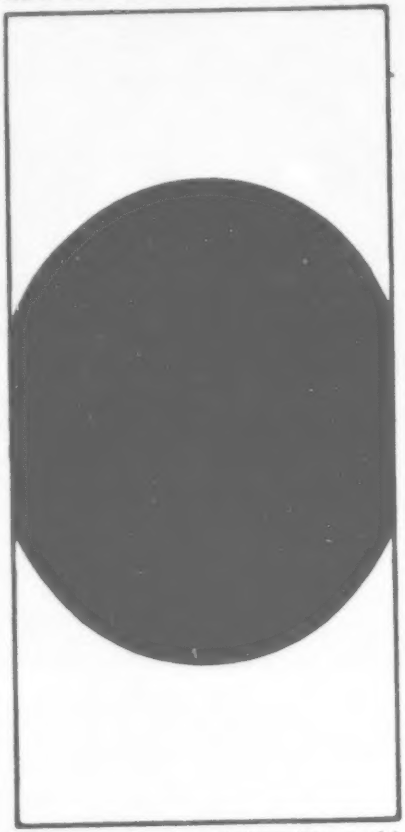
Across the hall, the mechanics students were baffled and amazed at many of the punctuation marks. "Are those English?" they asked. "I've never seen half of those." They hadn't seen them, because they had no use for them.

Six-year-old Kevin brings his workbook to the teacher and they read it together. One page looks like this:

> *it is fun waen I gat to ned in bad's solbimal.*

Kevin reads it out loud to his teacher: "It is fun when I get to ride in Dad's snowmobile."

His teacher is surprised. Kevin still confuses his vowel sounds and leaves out consonants. Yet he used the possessive apostrophe. "Where did you learn this?" she asks. Kevin shrugs. "I saw it in a book and thought I could put it here." When children need punctuation for their messages to be seen and heard, they become vacuum cleaners, sucking up odd bits from books, the classroom, other children's papers.



Young writers often use punctuation for unorthodox purposes. When Darron first wrote, he strung his letters together with no spaces between his words. His writing resembled his speech—one continuous flow of sounds. No one could read it. Then one day Darron made a dash between his first and last name, "so people can tell which is which."

No one corrected Darron's use of the dash. Adult "mistakes" are often a child's first steps toward understanding. Darron's teacher encourages children to experiment with punctuation, to solve their own problems. Later, if Darron continues to separate words with dashes, his teacher will suggest he leave spaces instead of using dashes.

Hoban doesn't regard a paper that is full of mechanical errors as wrong, only unfinished. "Each child is different," she says. "Some write their first drafts without any punctuation; they need to concentrate on their words. Later they put in the punctuation. Others put punctuation into every line as they write it." She respects the different methods. When a first draft is hard to read, she asks the writer to read it aloud. "I always want to respond first to the content of the paper. I listen to what the child is saying." Only in later drafts does she look at punctuation.

"Mrs. Hoban, will you help me correct this ski story?" Les asks. "I think I'm ready for a final draft." Les has written and rewritten his piece several times, and now he wants it perfect. He knows his final draft will be mounted and displayed. He wants to be proud of it.

They read the story together:

> *My Red Sled Cracked Me Up*
> *Zoom I went down the hill with my boots locked into my red sled Until I went over the snow jump then all of the sudden my sled sliped away and I hit the ground bump my friends didn't know I was hurt . . .*

"Les," Hoban says, "you've got a good piece of writing here. But it's hard for me to read without punctuation. Go back and put in the punctuation you think it needs. Then we'll look at it together."

Writer becomes editor. With a critical eye, Les examines each word, each space. He reads his words aloud, listening to his voice. Line by line, word by word, he scrutinizes the page.

That day, Les learned to distinguish exclamation marks from quotations. Later he will try out other kinds of marks—the parentheses he sees in dictionaries, the colons a friend is using. Through experiments, he'll learn. Les isn't afraid of punctuation. He needs it. ■

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*Lucy McCormick Calkins, a contributing editor for Learning, is a research associate at the University of New Hampshire. She also does consultant work with teachers and administrators.*

THE NATIONAL ELEMENTARY
PRINCIPAL
VOLUME 59 NUMBER 4 JUNE 1980

# A Special Section

# ood News from Schools

## heVery Model f a Model iddle School:

*onversation with Paul D. Collins*

By Paul L. Houts
and Sally Banks Zakariya

INGTON, VIRIA — **PRINCI-** When you were ving us around the ling earlier, you us you had ed closely with rchitect to get the of flexible design wanted in the school. Can you tell us some of the things you wanted to see here in terms of education?

**COLLINS:** The first thing we considered is that students go through a rapid phys-

*See Page 28*

## Design for Diversity

By Robert F[illegible]icka

DOUGLAS, WYOMING—In the past several years, open classrooms, team teaching, self-contained rooms, and multi-aging have all been seized on, promoted, and then discarded in frustration as elementary schools searched for one single organizational design that would satisfy everyone's needs and expectations. Whatever method was currently in use found opposition in some quarters, and schools wound up on the defensive.

Like other schools, Douglas Elementary School East had spent a lot of time and energy looking for the "right" organizational design. But in the fall of 1977, weary of pursuing what seemed to be a hopeless effort,

*See Page 39*

*Work in Progress:*

## One School's Writing Program

By Lucy McCormick Calkins

DURHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE—In a rural New Hampshire school, three full-time researchers are documenting what happens when teachers put writing at the center of their curriculum "When children are senders of information as well as receivers of it," says Donald Graves, director of the study on children's

*See Page 34*

**ew Kid on the Block:**

## ow One istrict Extends Helping Hand

Michael A. Crabbs
Susan K. Crabbs

KENY, IOWA—n September eletary school stus return to the room with mixed tions. For some it ns the end of a sant period of unctured time for friends, hob- travel, and a ld of other activ- Other students cipate with excitet class and school vities that chale their intelnce, values, emos, and creativity. fact that most dents adjust to the ning of school with a minimum of difficulty has been called a tribute to the resiliency of the young child.

But unfortunately, children whose families move to another city during the summer may not be so resilient. Confronted with few (if any) friends, a different living environment (and perhaps climate), and the trauma of the move itself, these children frequently become anxious and fearful of attending a new school. They may withdraw, become dependent on

*See Page 42*

## Breaking the Language Barrier In a Bilingual Community

By David A. Bisson
and Phyllis Hagel

RICHFORD, VERMONT — "*Bonjour! Comment ca va?*" echoes throughout the building. Our classrooms are providing education in children's home language.

For too long, the American educational system has given little or no recognition to the primary language and culture of non-Anglo students in traditional elementary school curricula. In some instances, such children have even been considered "disadvantaged." Special bilingual curricula have been developed for them that, while helping individual students, nonetheless continue to set them apart from the mainstream. When students leave these special bilingual programs, their contact with learning in the home language abruptly ceases.

*See Page 40*

**Spreading the Word:**

## The National Diffusion Network

By Shirley Boes Neill

CARMICHAEL, CALIFORNIA — For the past six years, every elementary and secondary school in the country has had the opportunity to improve its educational offerings by adopting an educational project that works.

The projects are part of the federally supported National Diffusion Network (NDN). Participation

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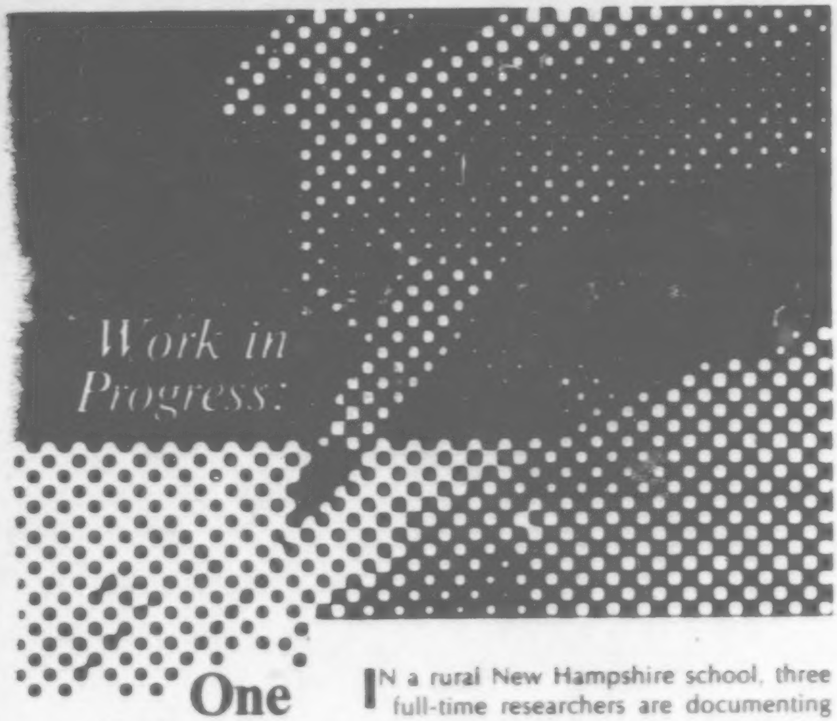

# *Work in Progress:* One School's Writing Program

JCY McCORMICK CALKINS

IN a rural New Hampshire school, three full-time researchers are documenting what happens when teachers put writing at the center of their curriculum. "When children are senders of information as well as receivers of it," says Donald Graves, director of the study on children's writing, "there is a new kind of energy, a new kind of involvement."

That energy is contagious. Researchers, teachers, and children catch the bug from each other. At Atkinson School, teachers are asking for more pencils, more paper. Requests for ditto masters and textbooks are way down. Children write—and their writing becomes their textbook.

"Writing's become the context for our day," one teacher says. Like others in the school, she teaches language through writing and uses writing in the content areas. Her children even write word problems in math. "I give easily as much time to writing as I give to reading and math," she says, "because I think it's just as important."

## THE WRITING PROCESS

Classrooms at Atkinson range from open to traditional. But despite the different levels and teaching styles, the approach to writing in each room is based on shared premises.

In the first and fifth grades alike, children at Atkinson experience the professional writer's cycle of craft. During the writing workshop at every grade level, some children will be rehearsing for writing, while others will be drafting or revising what they have written. Meanwhile, the teacher moves around the room, observing and encouraging. Teachers want all their children to cycle through the writing process, each at their own pace.

In the first grade, rehearsal is an especially important part of the composing process because many six-year-olds are present-tense oriented and cannot plan a piece until they sit down with paper in front of them. Even then, if you ask a first grader, "What are you going to write about?" many are apt to respond, "How should I know? I haven't drawed it yet."

First graders often rehearse throughout the process of writing. They write a line, and then they talk about or draw what will happen next. Often when children draw, their pictures lead them to new content. Sarah had already written: "The pretty little girl. Her name is Kristin. She loves flowers the best. She hates school the most." Sarah drew a nice picture of the girl in her room. Into the picture she drew a face with sharp teeth. Sarah seemed startled. "Now wait a doggone minute! A bad guy! He's coming to kidnap her!" And her writing took off, following her drawing.

Revision, for first graders, mostly means adding on. The young child often writes for the egocentric play of it, with little attention to an audience's need for information. Annie writes, "Jessie hid under the table," and neglects to say who Jessie is. Later her classmates will listen to the story. "Who's Jessie?" they'll ask. When the young writer explains that Jessie is a puppy, the class will say, "Why don't you put that in?"

But adding on is not so easy as one might expect. The young writer will probably look at the page, make a face, and say, "There's no room! What should I do, erase this page and put it in, then erase all the other pages to move it all back?"

Children need to be encouraged to mess up the page. It's easier for first graders to change what they've written when they write in books (construction paper covers, with lined paper inside) rather than on single sheets of paper. If all their sentences are on one page, only the first and last sentences are accessible. The rest are buried in the middle of the piece.

Lucy McCormick Calkins, research associate at the University of New Hampshire, Durham, is a researcher on the National Institute of Education's study of how children change in the writing process.

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In books, however, pages can be thrown away or added.

When six-year-old John read his book, "My Trip to the Football Field," to his classmates, they were confused. "Your book went hippity-hop from one thing to the next," Sharon said. "It's like you went to sleep and had a crazy dream." Later, John uses the class staple remover, Jaws, to help him unstaple his book. He puts pages in the right order and staples the book together again.

John's writing process is not unlike the process that professional writers experience. Like professional writers, John does not worry about his spelling and mechanics until after he has thought about his content. He writes and rewrites his book, based on the information he wants to share. Only then does he confer with his teacher on spelling.

John may have many mechanical mistakes in his story, but first-grade teacher Mary Ellen Giacobbe selects only a few to work on in each book. These skills are recorded in a writing journal so that both teacher and child have a record of what they have worked on together. "I usually find that the day after I teach something, the child begins to use it," the teacher says. "But if the child forgets, we look over the journal together and then the child goes back to his writing and corrects it himself." In this way, Giacobbe holds her students responsible for the skills they've been taught.

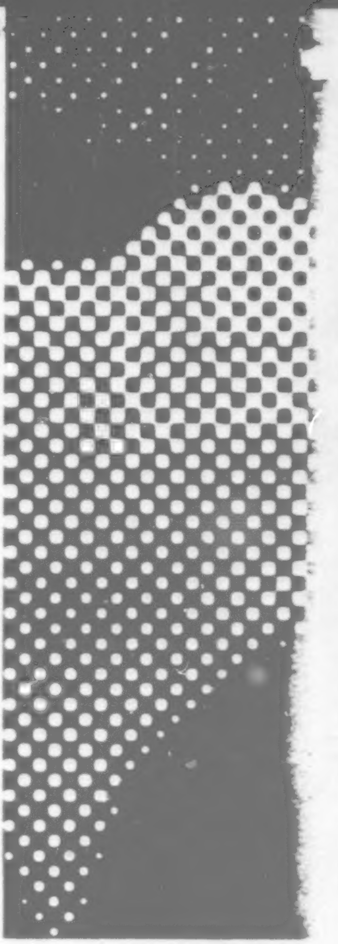
Children in the upper elementary grades also cycle among rehearsal, drafting, and revision. Yet they experience the stages in the writing process differently because they are older.

"My third graders often plan for writing on the bus, at home, or at recess," Pat Howard says. "In school, they don't need to plan so much as they need to see they have something worth writing about." Like other teachers at Atkinson, Howard insists that writers choose their own topics. "Deciding what you have to say is probably the hardest and most important part of writing," she says. "We cannot take this responsibility away from the writer. As children consider, select, and reconsider their topics, they experience the revision process. This is often the first and easiest form of revision. When writers write what they know and care about, their writing is their own. They are driven to make it good—they supply the initiative and the motivation."

For a while at first, the children try to avoid choosing their own topics. They recall old story starters, they beg for assignments, they retell television programs. They do not think their own interests and projects and lives are worth writing about.

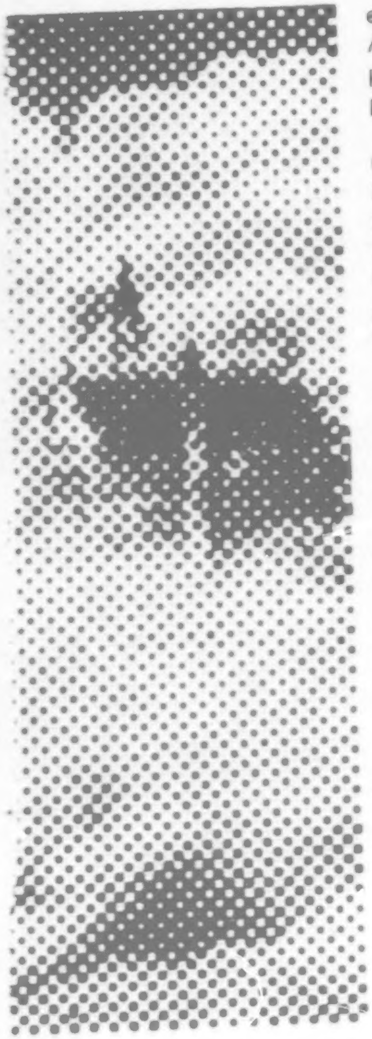
Pat Howard begins the year by asking her students to bring in things from home that they know and care about. Jeremy brings an ant farm. Jonathan brings a map from his trip. The children pair off and interview each other about the things they have brought. As one little girl shares the story behind her well-worn teddy bear, she finds that the details of her life are worth telling. And she also learns what she knows. She sees the surplus of information at her disposal and can begin to make choices. "What's the most important thing about Teddy? Where should I start?"

As the year progresses, Howard finds other ways to help children choose topics to write about. She encourages them to talk with each other, to brainstorm for topics. Sometimes she may begin a writing workshop by asking everyone to share topics—in hopes that the children will get ideas from each other.



Children learn the writing process through personal writing. Later they transfer it to other forms of writing. Now rehearsal involves library research, interviewing, note taking. Atkinson teachers realize that whether children write about the discovery of penicillin or a new baby brother, rehearsal does not mean outlining. Writers do not plan their entire piece before writing it, for they know new connections will be made as they write, and new questions will emerge. They know their organization will evolve through drafts and redrafts, through seeing their piece, through shaping it, through holding it in their hands. Rehearsal therefore, is a time to toy with ideas, to gather information, to sense direction. Rehearsal is a time to become ready.

But for some children, rehearsal is a way to avoid writing. They will conference, brainstorm, and draw . . . but won't put pencil to paper. Fourth-grade teacher Carolyn Currier finds ways to get these children writing. Tammy begins



each writing session with a conference. Alan charts his daily word count. Peter prides himself on a growing list of finished pieces.

Most of the fourth graders, however, move easily between rehearsal and drafting. They know that during a writing workshop, there is no alternative but to write. That requirement—and the challenge and fun of making meaning on paper—is enough to keep them cycling through the writing process.

Just as the line between rehearsal and drafting is often unclear, so, too, the line between drafting and revision blurs. Writers revise throughout the writing process. "I used to think children should finish a draft, then bring the completed piece to a conference for help in revision," says Pat Howard. Now she finds revision is easier when it comes early in the process.

Howard's third graders are introduced to revision through topic choice. At first they were asked to list ten topics and then choose the one they liked the best. Revision begins as selection. Soon the teacher was asking them to write several beginnings to a piece and then choose their favorite. Some children continued to use these strategies throughout the year, while others invented their own. A few never got hooked on revision at all.

Like the first-grade teacher, upper-elementary teachers encourage children to mess up their pages. Some teachers model the process. They write on the blackboard, then ask the children for suggestions. Soon the passage is full of scratch-outs, arrows, and codes for inserts. In some classes, children write on every other line of their paper so they'll have room to add on. In others, children are encouraged to put early drafts aside when they write, so that the revisions will be significant changes in focus, organization, and information rather than just refinements and corrections of the previous drafts. Recently Carolyn Currier displayed children's scratched-out, well-worked drafts on the bulletin board with this headline: "Make It Messy to Make It Clear."

Teachers in the upper elementary grades also emphasize that editing is only a small—and final—part of revision. Their first focus is on content: What are you trying to say? Which is your strongest section? Can you build on it? What other information do we need to know? Why is this topic significant to you? Can you make it more real to your readers?

Only later do teachers and children look together at the mechanics and language. Depending on a child's ability to sustain work on a piece, "later" may mean four drafts later, or it may mean a second look at the child's first draft. During these final conferences, teachers continue to give the responsibility to the writer. Rather than merely correcting the child's mistakes, teachers ask questions and teach skills.

In an editing conference, the teacher may ask questions like these: Are there any extra words that can be taken out? Are the words precise and honest? Ar the verbs active and strong? Does th piece sound right? What about para graphs?

"I try to teach them two or three thing about mechanics with each piece," P Howard says. She introduces Allison Roget's *Thesaurus*. She helps Greg wi paragraphs. She gives Kenny a list spelling words to study.

Howard suggests that her third grade borrow her red pencil and correct th own papers. Some students use dicti naries to correct their spellings. Less ab students circle words they think are wro and go to each other for corrections. the time children come to an editing co ference, they've already corrected mu of the paper.

"On the cover of their writing fold I jot down the skills we cover in con ence," Howard says. "I expect then use these skills next time they write."

### HOW IS IT DONE?

At Atkinson, teachers know that writing process takes time—lots of ti They give at least two and a half h a week to writing because they see it laboratory subject. "I used to thin hour, four times a week, would great length of time," Carolyn Currier "I thought my fourth graders woulc restless. But there are so many diff stages to writing, and when there is for sustained work, the stages all together."

Atkinson teachers take time from

subjects and give it to writing because they know writing offers a context for learning other skills. "Writing has changed the whole curriculum," Pat Howard says. "Last year I divided language into little parts—punctuation, spelling, reading, letter writing. I made up class lessons for everything and spent my time trying to convince the children workbooks were important." Now she teaches these skills during writing conferences.

Our research shows that Howard's children are learning language mechanics without realizing it—and they are learning them more effectively than if they were doing drills, workbook exercises, and language lessons. Also, although these third graders have no formal instruction in punctuation, they can define and explain an average of twice as many kinds of punctuation as can children in the third-grade class across the hall where writing is rare but punctuation is taught through daily classwork and drills.

At Atkinson, children not only write often, they write at regularly scheduled times. It is not enough to haphazardly find a few hours a week to use for writing. When writing time is always changing, always stolen, children write as if there were no tomorrow.

When children rely on writing every Monday, they will rehearse for writing during the weekend. While they know they'll write again on Wednesday and Friday, they can dare to experiment and to look back. The pace is their own. They know there will be time to find their problems, to hound out their difficulties. They write with a spirit of exploration because the pace allows them to follow their language and their images toward new meanings.

Most Atkinson teachers have the same basic routine for writing time, day after day. "I don't have to keep it varied, to dance on the table, as it were, to keep them interested. Writing is inherently interesting, as long as children write from their lives," one teacher says. The writing teachers rarely begin their sessions with gimmicks to motivate. "We don't need them," they say. Instead, writing usually begins with children getting their writing folders, rereading what they have already done, and getting down to work.

For Carolyn Currier's fourth-grade class, writing time extends out of a brief independent reading session. The children know to come in from recess and immediately get out their reading books. The room settles down. As children read, the teacher moves among them, checking on their writing plans for that day. After fifteen minutes, the children begin their writing. And they have each had a brief writing conference already.

A class of fifth graders often begins writing workshop by spending ten minutes writing in a journal. Their teacher writes, too, and after a while encourages them to share their journals or to use them as rehearsal for their writing.

Pat Howard usually begins her writing class by passing out folders. "During writing workshop, children mostly write, and conference with each other and with me," she says. "Often at the end of the day we have a brief share meeting to talk about a few students' work in progress."

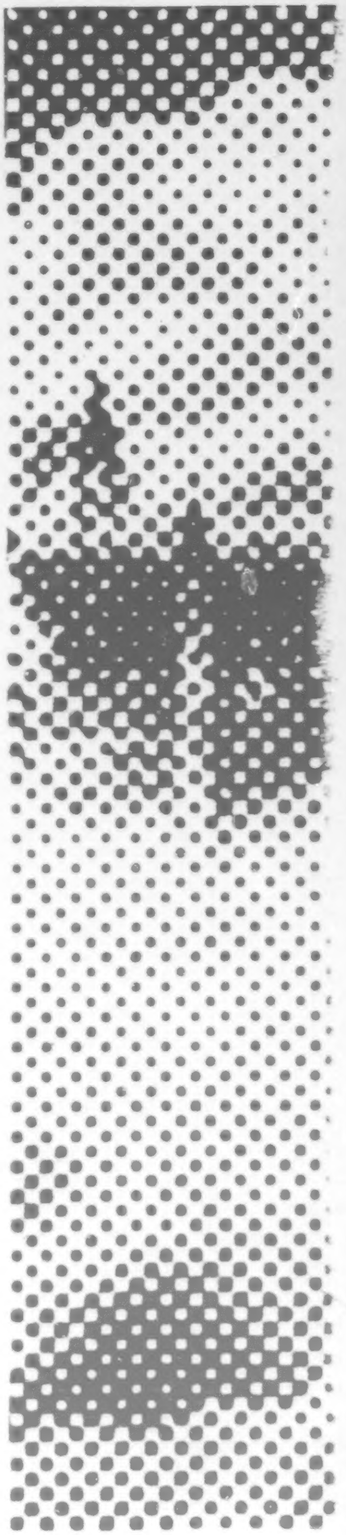
Most of the teachers at Atkinson spend very little time on whole-class writing instruction. "I do most of my class instruction during the share meeting at the end of the day," Howard says, "where I model responses to evolving drafts. Sometimes I also have a five- or ten-minute activity at the beginning of a workshop." Following are examples of activities Howard and the other teachers might use:

☐ The teacher asks the children to each list five problems that writers often have (not enough detail, too big a subject) and then to star the problem they themselves seem to be having and to keep it in mind as they reread their drafts.

☐ The children gather in a circle and tell where they are in the drafting process and what their main idea is. This is a chance for the teacher to touch base with each child, and for children to realize their classmates are all involved in the same process. It also helps children to have to define their main idea.

☐ Children are asked to pair off and read their evolving drafts to their partner. The listeners ask questions like, "What's your favorite part?" "What problems are you having?" "Do you need any help?"

☐ The teacher chooses one child's first and final drafts, and reads them out loud to the class to illustrate how revision



helps to improve a piece. The children tell why the final draft is better and discuss the qualities of good writing.

☐ The teacher reads the beginning lines of published books in the class library, and the students talk about how writers work on their leads. Children go back and rewrite their own leads four different ways and then choose the one they like best.

Teachers may also use this time to model good conferences. A writing conference may be merely a fingertip on the shoulder or an encouraging word, or it may be a fifteen-minute group discussion about a shared problem. In one conference, Amy explains how to start a go-cart. Peter adds quotation marks to his piece. Sarah explains the significance of her topic. There is no set way to hold a writing conference.

Yet teachers agree on a few principles. Above all, they agree that the conference method of teaching writing gives responsibility to the writer. During the conference, the teacher listens. She may listen to the piece and respond to the subject: "I'm glad you shared that with me, Becky. I never knew about that accident. How did you feel?" Or the teacher may listen not to the piece but to the process: "What problems are you having? Have you read it out loud to yourself? What do you plan to do next?"

Through questions, teachers extend the writer's process of weighing options, of making deliberate choices, of experimenting. Sometimes the piece gets better. Sometimes the piece gets worse. Teachers remember that the conference is not the time to teach qualities of good writing—these can be taught at the beginning of the workshop during five minutes of classwork. But the conference is a time to support and nurture the process. In the long run, the quality of writing improves along with the process.

## A SENSE OF OWNERSHIP

The different pace of writing leads to a different sense of ownership. "I used to try to shortcut things by assigning topics and correcting papers," one Atkinson teacher says. "But now I find that when children choose their own topics and revise their papers based on their own decisions, they really care about their writing. It belongs to them." Ownership is worth the time it takes.

When children control the writing process, the teacher's role changes. Whereas once the teacher's energy went into choosing enticing topics, deciding how many drafts a piece needs, finding the problems in a draft, and making corrections on the drafts, these responsibilities now belong to the child.

"Children become invested in their work. It is theirs. They want to do the best they can do," one teacher says. When children have ownership of their piece, they supply the motivation, the energy. Teachers can observe, question, and extend. Teachers, as well as children, experience a different pace, and with it, a different quality.

When children write, they reach for the skills they need. Writing demands initiative. Writers do not receive learning; they make it. Teachers at Atkinson find writing turns children into experts on ancient Greek traditions, broken radios, salamanders' stomachs. They become experts also on pronoun agreement, punctuation, and cursive penmanship. Children want their messages to be seen and heard. The urge to tell leads them to pursue the skills they need.

The results of the project are clear First-grade parents came to Open Hous in October saying, "My first grader think she can read anything: signs, label books. She's reading to her little brother! They ask what reading program ha wrought such wonders, and the teache tells them: writing.

In the upper elementary grades, paren are saying: "I've never seen my son involved in school. When he moves to the next grade, be sure he's in anoth writing classroom."

When children are involved, they lea more. "The key word is trust," princip Jean Robbins says. Teachers at Atkins trust children to write their own te books. Children write—and then, step step, they learn the skills and informati they need to write well. "In giving p ority to writing," the principal conclud "we are in effect saying to children know you have something worth sayi and that what you are saying can be basis for your learning.'"

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SEE READER ACTION LISTING 106

# Kids *Can* Write the First Week of School

BY MARY ELLEN GIACOBBE

On the first day of school, I wanted to find out what my first graders could do as writers. I gave each of five children a 9-by-12-inch journal containing 40 sheets of unlined paper and I told them that the journals were for them to write in. I assigned the other 17 children in the class to other areas of the curriculum.

As I circulated around the classroom observing and talking with the children, someone tugged at my sleeve, and I turned to see Mark standing by my side with his journal, pointing to the drawing he had just completed.

"This is the ocean and this is a sailboat and this is the anchor and these are clouds," he said, describing each part of his picture.

Mark had written *BD* for boat and *KLD* for cloud, but he felt that he couldn't write *anchor* so I helped him.

"Can I do another page?" he asked.

I nodded my head and Mark returned to the writing table, where Ellen was busy tracing the outline of her hand with a blue marker. She colored the center of her tracing and the thumb with a red marker, and used orange, purple, brown and black markers to color in the fingers. A big yellow sun appeared in the top right corner of the page, and two flowers were on the left. Short, vertical green lines bordered the bottom of the page. Ellen wrote: *The Trce was Tacan a wec* (The turkey was taking a walk).

She read the words to herself, crossed out the *T* in *Tacan*, changed it to a *w*, and on top of *a wec*, she wrote *D the hall*. Her message now read: *The Trce was wacan D the hall* (The turkey was walking down the hill).

Ellen already knew that she could change her message to say exactly what she wanted it to say. She was rereading and revising.

My attention was drawn to the tap, tap, tapping of the black marker on David's page as he was creating a snowstorm. He wrote: *I So So* (I saw snow).

David said, "This is a big snowstorm, a real blizzard." As he touched each word, he read, "I saw snow."

I asked David, "What do you notice about the words *saw* and *snow*?"

He replied, "They both begin with the same sound."

**A Contradictory Revelation**

By the third day of school, all 22 children had their own journals and they were all writing. I knew that children could write sooner than we think, but I thought it would take longer than three half days of school before an entire class of 5-, 6- and 7-year-olds would consider themselves writers.

As the blank pages in their journals came alive with drawings and words telling of their experiences, I could see that these children had entered school ready to engage in the active process of writing. They were writing their own workbooks. They were showing me what they knew as well as what they needed to know. There were no errors to be red penciled, just information to show me what the next step of instruction should be.

In my education courses, I had been taught that children must first learn to read and then develop a reading vocabulary before they could begin to write. These children were contradicting that teaching. They could write even though they could not read (although they were usually able to read what they wrote).

During the second week of school, I administered a self-made writing test of 20 words. In choosing the words, I tried to use as many different initial and final consonants and long and short vowels as possible. Fifteen of the words were one-syllable and five were two-syllable words.

I worked with the children individually or in pairs. I gave each child a piece of paper, sectioned into rectangles numbered 1 through 20. I asked the children to write the word *rag* next to the number 1. I did not emphasize any sounds; I said the word as I would in normal conversation. I continued with the rest of the test in the same manner.

After 90 minutes of testing, I learned that my first graders were able to write far more than I ever imagined they could. I wondered why I had waited so

(continued)

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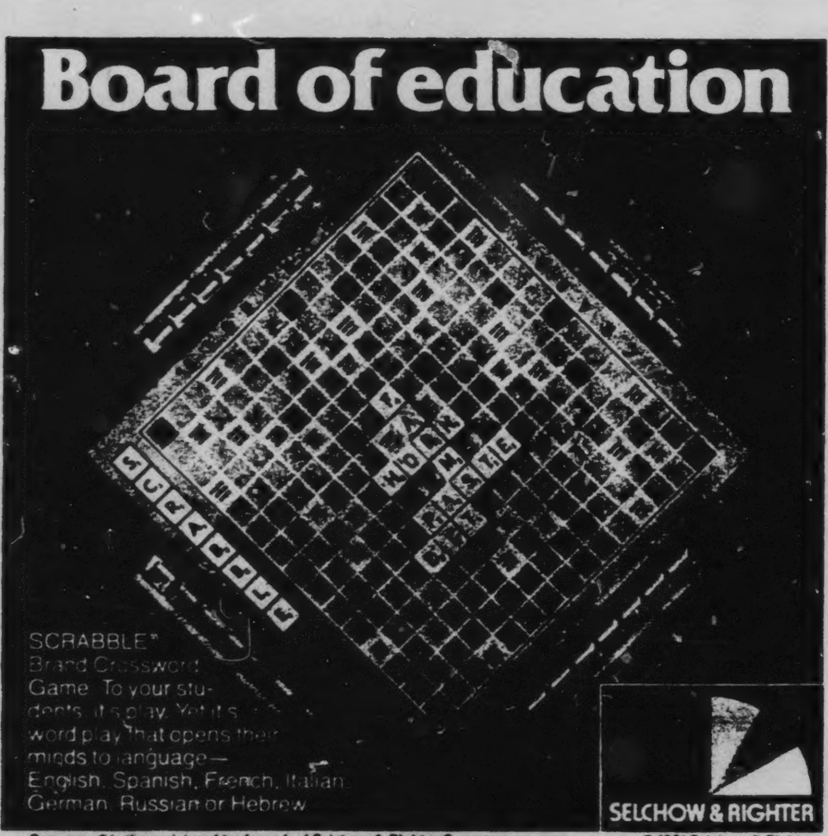

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## Early Grades

*(continued)*

long in other years to let my children write.

A sampling of the test results shows four of the words used in the test and samples of the children's responses. Jeremy and Ed had come to school able to write most words accurately. Helen was able to write the initial sounds of words. Jennifer and Lisa knew all of the consonant sounds and were able to use them in writing a word. They were also using vowels. Bob was writing most initial and final consonants, and he knew a sprinkling of vowels. Mark could write the initial consonants in *five*, *buzz* and *doctor*, but he could not identify the initial sound in *rag*.

| | rag | five | buzz | doctor |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ellen | rag | fiv | Bozo | Dokr |
| Helen | ro | FS | B | D |
| John | RAKG | FAF | BAS | DAODR |
| Jennifer | RAG | FIVE | BIS | DOCTR |
| Lisa | RAG | FOYV | BAS | DOCTR |
| Bob | RAG | FA | BSS | DIr |
| Donna | rag | foif | Bus | Doud |
| David | Rag | Fiv | Baz | DOCtr |
| Jeremy | RAG | FiVE | Buzz | DOCTER |
| Ed | RAG | FiVE | Buzz | Doctor |
| Mark | iA | FF | BS | DT |
| Susan | raG | Fiv | BU | DC |

**What I Found Out**

1. Most of the children felt this was an activity they could do.
2. Only two said, "I don't know how to write."
3. The two children who said they did not know how to write did not know all of their letters. Ken would say, "Buzz, buh, buh, B. What does a *B* look like?" He was hearing the sound, he could reproduce the sound and give it a letter name, but he could not remember what the letter looked like.
4. All of the children wrote in a left-to-right direction.
5. Most of the children knew the initial and final consonant sounds and were able to use them in a word.

My first graders did not stop writing at the end of the first week of school. They wrote continuously throughout the year. After less than three months, their words began to make sentences and their sentences became stories. In that time, 47 books were typed and sewn into hard covers, and these books became their reading. Because my children were able to write, they were also able to say, "Yes, we can read!" ■

*Mary Ellen Giacobbe is a first grade teacher at the Atkinson Elementary Schools in Atkinson, N.H.*

# Kds Cn Rit

BY SUSAN SOWERS

Kevin reads aloud his story "All About Ants" to his first grade teacher, Mary Ellen Giacobbe. "*Ains r mvn in a bld and ther wra insid and ot.*" it begins. As he reads, Giacobbe writes down his words, with correct spellings, to help her remember his exact message: "Ants are moving in a building. They are inside and outside." Later she will type his story, using standard spelling, and bind it into a book for the class library.

Six-year-old Joshua wants to write the word *radio*. He pronounces it several times and writes *r d o*. "There's another sound here," he says, pointing to the space between the *r* and *d*, "but I'm not sure what it is." He says *radio* again, then fills in the letter *a*.

Sunny, another first grader, is busy writing a new book—"My Baby Kusin's Berthday Partee." Her first page is an aerial-view drawing of 12 smiling relatives sitting around a table and eating birthday cake. Sunny writes as deliberately as she draws, supplementing the words she knows (*my, baby, day*) with invented spellings that let her tell her story.

Logic and custom demand that beginning writers practice the rules of spelling and grammar before they write. But Kevin, Joshua and Sunny—the children in Giacobbe's first grade class at Atkinson Academy, the public school for Atkinson, N.H.—are learning to write by writing, through a process called invented spelling.

Invented spelling gives young writers early power over words. Professional writers don't worry about correct spelling on their first drafts, and neither do inventive spellers. They want precise and lively words to tell their stories, they don't want to stop to look up each word in a dictionary. Inventive spellers compose their own words using the letters of the alphabet they've learned.

The process of invented spelling is fairly standard among young writers. First they represent a word with only the letter that stands for the first sound in the word. Then they add another letter for the ending sound. Finally, still relying on the sounds of their own speech, they fill in the middle letters. Thus Kevin pronounces "bath" *baf* and writes it as it sounds. Later he will learn to spell correctly.

## Case Studies

Only a few educational researchers have investigated invented spelling. Glenda Bissex is an educator and mother of 12-year-old Paul, who, at the age of 5, learned to read and write without formal instruction, through invented spelling. Bissex has documented her son's growth as a writer and reader in a five-year case study for her doctoral dissertation for Harvard Graduate School of Education (the book, *Gnys At Wrk: A Child Learns To Write and Read* by Glenda L. Bissex, will be published this fall by Harvard University Press).

Paul learned about writing and reading by watching his mother write in a notebook and by listening to her read stories to him. He learned on his own some basic principles of written English: We write from left to right and from top to bottom on a page, and letters represent the sounds in words. Later Paul discovered he could read the messages he had written, and others could, too, if his symbols matched what they expected a word to look like. Paul learned to read other authors' words before he went to school, but *after* he learned to read his own.

"Spelling is a matter of habit for adults, but not for children," says Bissex. "Adults project this habit onto kids without bothering to investigate. Learning to spell is a matter of knowledge, not habit."

Parents don't worry about errors when a child learns to talk, but they may worry too early about errors in writing. "Errors are a piece of information rather than something to be erased," says Bissex. They tell us as much about what children know as about what they don't know.

Maria Montessori observed invented spelling 70 years ago. As director of a day-care facility for the children of Rome's factory workers, Montessori noticed that preschool children who had been taught the alphabet but could not read were making up their own words from the letters they'd learned. Her observations of these children of working class families counter the assumption that invented spelling occurs only among children with well-educated parents.

## Putting Theory to Practice

Nearly a hundred books written and illustrated by students line the library shelves of Mary Ellen Giacobbe's first grade classroom. Giacobbe types each story ("I like to type their stories," she says; "it gives me a chance to think about each child"), then glues wallpaper onto cardboard covers and sews the typed pages together with dental floss. She keeps the children's first drafts in a file to help her evaluate their writing progress.

"Last year so much time was taken up with worksheets," Giacobbe recalls, "there wasn't time for kids to write. Every day they had tapes to listen to, a new art project, math and reading worksheets. I had their time so occupied, they had no time to write. And I really thought that first graders had to be spoon fed, that I had to tell them what to write and when to write."

Then Giacobbe visited a classroom where the children used invented spelling to write. "When I showed my students the books those children had written, they said, 'That's cinchy. We can do that!' And they've been writing and reading their own books ever since. They're not very interested in reading books from the school library yet. They're most interested in reading *their* books."

Six-year-olds, Giacobbe feels, want to explore their own interests without fear of violating the rules of writing etiquette. Sandy, an advanced student in arithmetic, has written "The Book About Nine" to explain that number's special properties. Jimmy writes about race cars and the Bionic Man. Chris is learning about chemistry through writing his book "All About Chemicles." Others in Giacobbe's class write about the death of a pet, fear of the dark, friendships, celebrations.

Giacobbe knows that children do not need to blow bubbles or visit the

continued on page 81

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# *Early Grades* -38

(continued from page 14)

zoo in order to have somethin write about. She will never ass topic such as "I Am an Ice-Cre Cone" or give them the first se of a Martian adventure. Childre believes, tap their own resource experience when they write just they do when they talk or draw or pla.

Each morning before lunch, the 2 children in Giacobbe's class meet o a colorful patchwork rug to read, liste to and discuss the morning's writing Giacobbe is convinced her students would not write as much or as well i she did not support their efforts with these class readings and discussions.

Sarah reads her story, "The Pretty Little Girl," aloud, standing beside Giacobbe:

*the pritty littl gril*
*her named is krisden*
*she love flawrs the bset* . . .

When Sarah finishes reading, Giacobbe thanks her for introducin and telling about "the pretty little g l." Then she asks Sarah, "Remember when we talked about periods?"

"Oh, yeah," responds Sarah, who then rereads her paper and places periods at the ends of sentences.

During individual and group conferences, Giacobbe is careful to respond to the content of each child's writing before commenting on any writing mechanics. She works with Chris on the difference between *they're*, *their* and *there*, but only after she has praised his growing knowledge of chemistry. After hearing Jimmy's racing drama, she recognizes his pride that his father "put smoke in the other guy's face." Only then does she work with him on the *f* sound, since he spelled *father* and *face* with an *l*. (Jimmy started writing using only 12 consonants; he learns more as he needs them.)

Giacobbe believes these daily conferences help her develop a more thorough knowledge and understanding of her students than would be possible were she still red-penciling student worksheets. Children don't discover rules in a vacuum. Specific information *does* need to be supplied. And though she knows the benefits of invented spelling have not yet been measured and statistically analyzed, they are clearly evident in her classroom. Her children are learning to write and to read. And they are active, confident learners. ■

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*Susan Sowers, a former classroom teacher, is a student at Harvard Graduate School of Education.*

# AFTER ALL, THEY HAVE WRITING IN COMMON

Judith Egan
RFD #4 Fordway Extension
Derry, New Hampshire 03038

"This is BORING!" I couldn't believe my ears! My enthusiasm vanished as my mind slipped back over all those hours of preparation. I was attempting to introduce my second grade class to some outstanding pieces of children's literature by sharing my own special collection of books. However, Richard's words were the very thoughts of his classmates. Actually feeling crushed, I resorted to leaving the books for the children to examine more closely, hoping that might kindle at least a little enthusiasm. Meeting with failure once again, I carefully moved the books back to their shelves, rationalizing the failure with, "They're only eight years old, really too young to be able to appreciate literature and the individual style of each author." The remainder of the year we enjoyed stories but never really connected those books to the very real people who write them - individuals, like ourselves, who think, feel and function as part of our society.

Two and a half years have passed since that day. If only I had known then what I know now. That is, that children cannot truly appreciate another's accomplishments unless they, too, have experienced a similar process. The seven and eight year olds in my present class now write constantly. Sarah continues her series on owls; Anna retells her recent hospital experiences; Katy relives a family trip; Hilary writes a touching story of her adoption; Sean tells why he admires his teenage brother and Jason shares his love and knowledge of horses. Children also write in curriculum areas, not because they have to, but because writing makes a unit more meaningful to them. As a result of science projects, Tommy begins his book, *Dinosaurs*, "Dinosaurs lived before man was on the earth," and Mary writes in *Good Foods*, "Bananas are yellow and they grow on a tree. You peel them to eat them. They have bruises sometimes." Children write regularly about the books and records they enjoy and write rather lengthy scripts for plays and puppet shows which are later staged for the entire class.

The desire to write is so natural yet these chidlren, like any other writer, have experienced the frustration of not having the right word when they need it, have experimented with different media for illustrations, have revised pieces until they're just as they'd like them to be, have accepted another child's criticism as constructive and have sat through individual and group conferences. They've also experienced the disappointment of a word being mistyped during publication or the binding being too loose after they've worked *so* hard to sew the pages together. Sound tough? It is! However, when that book has been completed, 'published' in its hardbound edition with attractive wallpaper on cardboard covers and is read to the class, the pride is so evident. When a child comments, "I can tell that you *really* worked hard on that, I love it," or, "You really have a lot of information about your topic," the enormous smile, sparkling eyes and pride of the writer all show the process is most definitely worth all the effort.

Thus, I enthusiastically placed my precious collections on our classroom display shelf once again this year. I somehow felt it would be different and it was. After having introduced the children to many of Tasha Tudor's books, I recently read *Corgiville Fair*. Following the story, I casually asked, "Well, what do you think of this book of Tasha's?" At least fifteen hands went up! "I love her illustrations, but in this book, she didn't use frames." "She always writes old-fashioned style." "Did she ever get a Caldecott medal?" "Look at all the detail - the corgis are all dressed up." "This story didn't really happen but some of hers did." These were all very typical responses. Tasha Tudor has become a special friend of the children as I hope other authors will. Debby has written Tasha Tudor, a biography. As she learned more about her character's style and personality, Debby has continued to make revisions in her book. Recently, a second edition was 'published' complete with revisions. Debby has chosen to send Tasha Tudor to the character it so lovingly portrays:

> Tasha Tudor is a great illustrator and writer. I love A Time To Keep and other books. I love the dogs. They are corgis. The corgis are cute. I love Corgiville Fair. I have Amy's Goose. Her daughter wrote Amy's Goose and she illustrated it. Tasha Tudor makes frames around the pictures sometimes. In A Time To Keep, the frames go with the seasons. Tasha Tudor's age is around 65. She has been writing since she was 18. Tasha Tudor lives in a farmhouse. Tasha Tudor writes old-fashioned style. Tasha Tudor's first book to be published was Pumpkin Moonshine. I love Tasha Tudor because she makes really nice books.

When Debby finished reading this, her classmates actually clapped for they, too, identified with Debby the author. They knew what an accomplishment it was. Debby smiled as she's never smiled before and held her book close as if to say, "I'm really proud of myself." Other children in Debby's class have chosen to write letters to Tasha Tudor. "We saw your picture in the newspaper." "How long does it take you to write?" "How many books have you written?" "Do you really live like it was long ago?" "I love owls and you use them in your illustrations." "I have three of your books." "I don't have any of your books, but I wish I did." "Do you really use the butter churn you told about?" "I LOVE YOU because you're a great illustrator and writer." All of these tell me I've finally found the key to helping the young child become aware, really aware, of literature. Three weeks of anticipation finally brought the awaited response - a handwritten letter from Tasha Tudor complete with a line drawing of her Corgi, Cricket. Everyone cheered and the children surrounding me seemed one enormous smile. Even here, the relationship developed with this author didn't cease. "I want to write back." "I wonder if that's how she draws the corgis before they're published." "She said in the letter, more than one corgi is corgyn, not corgis." "Can we all have the letter?" "I want to frame it." That afternoon twenty-one very carefully held, photocopied treasures rode the bus home with the children. Tasha Tudor has really touched the lives of these seven and eight year olds.

Other authors have followed Tasha Tudor, all with enthusiasm - Norman Bridwell, Beatrix Potter, Shel Silverstein, Robert McClosky. I'm attempting to demonstrate individuality, living and non-living authors, those from our New England areas as well as those from other geographical locations, contemporary writers as opposed to those of a bygone era. All of these contrasts are helping the child to look at every writer, including themselves, as unique individuals. Mary has written in Beatrix Potter, "I wish she was still alive so she could show me how to draw better." In discussing contrasting styles, Andy says he likes the way Shel Silverstein uses pen and ink in his illustrations - "Sometimes I use just pencil. It's sort of the same." Of Robert McCloskey, Hilary mentions, "His illustrations look like charcoal crayon," and many children chuckle to learn that he actually needed to keep ducks in his bathtub in order to complete the illustrations in Make Way For Ducklings. The children have become increasingly aware of time through writers. "That was written when my dad was eight years old," responds Andy when a copyright was read and Debby brought in One Morning in Maine and A Time of Wonder which belonged to her mom and uncle as youngsters. Melissa tells us how her mother read Beatrix Potter's books as a child and the children are bringing in books after discovering that they have many books in their own libraries that they were never even aware of. In our trips to the school library, the children have learned how to use the card catalog so that they may find books by the authors we've discussed. Visitors to our classroom are often asked if they know of a certain author or if they've seen a newly published book. Never does a visitor leave the classroom without at least a half dozen children sharing their own stories.

The children critique writers but that's not enough. They also want to know about each personally for they are now able to understand the relationship between the livesof people and the topics they write about. We are always looking for articles and books which will give us further insights into someone's life. I now realise that in order to appreciate another person as a writer, the child needs to write. How can one possibly understand the process if its never been experienced? We take children on field trips so that they may understand from first-hand experience. I visit other classrooms to see new ideas but they only have meaning when I am able to apply those ideas in my own classroom. A connoisseur of fine food has only become one through direct experience with food. We all acknowledge the fact that children learn to read by reading and now I know that children only become writers by writing. We really *can* close the gap between the young writer and the accomplished writer. After all, they have writing in common.

# BREAK THE WELFARE CYCLE: LET WRITERS CHOOSE THEIR TOPICS

Donald H. Graves
*Forum*
University of Michigan
Winter, 1982

# BREAK THE WELFARE CYCLE: LET WRITERS CHOOSE THEIR TOPICS

A seventh grade teacher left my writing workshop one Wednesday afternoon filled with renewed optimism only to return seven days later with that tarred and feathered look. She was a bit hostile to boot. "I told my class they could choose any subject they wished for their writing assignment this week. Well, you'd think I'd asked them to undress in public." Her glance at me said, "That was a pretty dumb suggestion . . . letting them choose their own topics."

"Some children asked for a list of good topics. Others asked outright, 'What topics do you (the teacher) like best'? More said, "Our topics are dumb," they pleaded "give us the topics."

By the time most children reach seventh grade they are unable to choose topics. This serious symptom is an indicator of many other problems in the life of the young writer. Children who can't choose topics see writing as an artificial act disconnected from their own lives. Writers need to know what they can command and defend, to put their voices on the line.

From the second grade on we won't let them learn to choose topics. Instead, the child goes on writer's welfare, dependent on the teacher for everything starting with the topic. Our reasoning seems to be: "Children are afraid to write; worse, they come to the page with nothing of significance to write about. We'll take care of both problems by giving them the topic."

The welfare trail begins. The child is fed a diet of snappy gimmicks: story starters, stimulating pictures, "dial-a-story" games, opening paragraphs, open-ended stories to complete, as well as teachers' favorite topics. It doesn't have to be this way. Children bring rich experiences and voices to the page.

Children show us much about topics and how we can better help them. Under a three year grant from the National Institute of Education, Susan Sowers, Lucy Calkins and I have completed a study of the composing processes of young children from age six through ten. One small sector of data on topic are reported here to show the importance of topic choice as well as their implication for the teaching of writing.

## CHOICE AND VOICE

Topics come easily to six year olds. They write about personal experiences, fantasies, and information books about prehistoric animals, weapons, weather, and animals. The sources seem unending. The children are confident; their voices boom through the print. For many these happy days don't last.

Developmental issues intrude. Somewhere between grades one and three the child becomes aware of the intrusion of audience. The audience includes the child himself. The child finds that other children as well as the teacher react differently to his writing. Until now the child supposed others had the same interpretation, registered the same feelings about his writing.

A sense of audience is intensified by the writer's growing ability as a reader. Good readers are overheard saying, "This is awful. I don't know what to say. What's a good subject to write about"? At this stage the child's critical skills outweigh his ability to produce a text satisfying to himself. The child looks for help. Instead of giving help, we induct the child into the welfare cycle. We ignore the resources the child already has to deal with - the problem of topic choice.

Help means leading writers back to their resources, their sense of territory, information, and voice. Help writers to speak about their topics. When teachers help writers to speak about their topics and how they compose them, children find renewal in the sound of their voices. They hear new information because the teacher listens, reflects, and questions the writer in such a way that the writer teaches the teacher about what he knows. The children in our New Hampshire study were constantly speaking about their writing through formal and informal conferences. Note the voice, sense of process, and control of information by two nine year old children as they speak about their topics:

> Andrea
>
> I think I say "Little White Fish Jumped All Around Us" and I realized--How big are they? Why white? What did they look like? And I realized probably my whole story is like that - blah! Like I have, "I pressed my toes in hot sand." What was it like? How did it feel? So I'm going to do a whole new draft, rather than fix it up. I'll sort of follow along with the other draft, but in my own words.
>
> Brian
>
> When I wrote about the cat and the car running over it, it came to my mind. When we were riding down North Broadway and we saw a burning car . . . I could describe the car burning up - it was a Pontiac, burning in the night. Hey, a title! "Flames in the Night"!

Both children encounter problems but articulate a process to solve them. Andrea is highly critical of her piece about the fish but isn't discouraged. She'll do a new draft. Brian discovers a new topic and title in the midst of writing another. These children speak this way because their teachers have not only given them responsibility for their topics, but help to deal with issues in draft.

## TOPIC CHOICE HELPS THE WRITING

When writers know the choice is their's and they write at least four times a week, they think about topics when they are not writing. When six year old John discovered a bat with his father on a Saturday, he rehearsed both topic and some of the text before he wrote about it on Monday morning. John knew he could rediscover what happened in the event through writing and that time would be provided for it when he got to class. Nine year old Amy is interested in foxes. She has chosen the topic. The night before she will write, Amy rehearses the lead to her fox piece. One of the significant findings in our study was the amount of "off-stage" thinking done by children who felt they controlled their topics.

Children who write regularly, yet have topic choice, are seldom without a topic. Their writing folders contain lists of "future" topics. These are topics they pick up from reading, other children, new experiences, or information they wish to know more about. Or, in the course of writing one topic, inevitable another more interesting one arises. It is saved for another day.

Teachers in the study placed great emphasis on the information behind the topic. The children were interviewed about the content in their topics; they were responsible for teaching the teachers about what they knew. This procedure appeared to result in two study findings as writers developed:

(1) More problems of information handled in second or third draft were dealt with at the point of choosing the topic.

(2) As children learned to choose and limit topics, the number of drafts diminished.

## THE SWITCH FROM CHOICE TO ASSIGNMENT

Writing is, after all, a tool for learning. It is meant to be used in mathematics, science, and social studies. It is not the exclusive property of personal narrative, fiction, or poetry. As part of any child's diet, writing needs to be used as a means of finding out, sometimes by assignment. Such writing can begin in the primary years. The central diet, however, still needs to be with the child's developing power in choosing the topic. The switch from drafts in personal narrative or personal topic choice can be made in a very short time frame.

By the second year of the study many of the eight year olds now turning nine, had had considerable experience with topic choice, and the use of successive drafts to clarify their subjects. In the second half of the fourth grade the teacher moved the children into content writing. The switch from personal writing to writing in science and the social studies was barely perceptible. The children used more resources, interviews, had some work on note taking, but the actual composing in the new genre was hardly different from the personal writing. These children already knew what it meant to have supporting information, to organize toward meaning, to have more precise language to communicate their topic.

## CHOICE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Children learn through the choices they make. Early on, first choices, even second and third ones are often poor. Fred wants to write about "space" but is swallowed up by the enormity of his choice. With help Fred may find he knows more about the space shuttle. He begins to learn the power of limitations, the meaning of choice.

Our data show children learn and benefit from choice. They think about writing when they are not writing. They learn the meaning of choice by thinking of information behind their topics. They find it easier to learn to revise in personnally related themes because there is more depth to their understanding of the topic. Most of all, they learn the meaning of voice. They learn to put themselves into their pieces because they are able to defend the information in their topics.

We need to break the teaching cycle that places young people on writer's welfare. Children won't learn if we think for them. We want writers who will write and talk as if they knew their subject. Independence begins when writers choose their topics.

RESEARCH UPDATE

## Questions For Teachers Who Wonder If Their Writers Change -

Donald H. Graves and
Mary Ellen Giacobbe

Donald H. Graves

for the Committee on Research,
National Council of Teachers of
English

Mary Ellen Giacobbe, co-author this month, was the first grade teacher in whose room data were gathered in the Atkinson Study. She publishes and is now a student at Harvard.

D.H.G.

# QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS WHO WONDER IF THEIR WRITERS CHANGE

How hard it is for teachers to tell if their writers improve! The growth of young writers is often erratic: On Monday poor writing, improvement on Tuesday, an excellent day on Wednesday, an everage day on Thursday, poor writing again on Firday. The teacher leaves school on Friday wondering if anything significant has happened during the week, even though such a pattern is a normal one for most writers. She wonders where to begin on Monday morning.

Since the growth of young writers in the short term is both uneven and erratic, new questions need to be asked that will give teachers a picture of child change in the long run. There are subtle changes of a more fundamental nature that can show teachers significant change, even in the midst of a child's struggle. Teachers who ask process questions, not only gather sound information about child growth, but also ask the very questions that contribute significantly to the growth of the children themselves.

## A Teacher Who Found Out For Herself

Mary Ellen Giacobbe, a first grade teacher in Atkinson, New Hampshire, wanted to find out how her children's concepts of the writing process changed from December through the end of the school year. Underlying her interest in concepts were simple questions: "Are my children improving as writers? If so, how?" She formulated many of her interview questions with Lucy McCormick Calkins, who had a grant from the NCTE Research Foundation to help teachers conduct their own research.

## Rationale for Questions

For three years Giacobbe met several times weekly with each of her children to discuss their progress as writers. She was aware her six year old children often made penetrating statements about their writing, even though the writing was not necessarily going well at the time. She noticed that as children broadened their ability to plan, solve problems, have a language to discuss their writing, and a sense of options for the writing process, their writing products ultimately changed for the better.

Giacobbe knew the products improved each year. This was easily documented in writing conferences and the children's writing folders. She needed information, however, that showed where the children were on process of understanding, that she might have data to help them from day to day during writing conferences.

She framed a six month period of teaching with questions that were asked before and after children wrote in December and in June. Ten of her twenty-three children were interviewed about their writing process, transcripts made of interviews with copies of writing xeroxed to show the relationship between child concepts of writing and what happened in the writing itself. These ten children were distributed along low, middle, and high performance levels in writing. The following questions were asked of the children:

### BEFORE THEY WROTE

1. What are you going to be writing about? (Children chose their own topics throughout the year.)
2. How are you going to put that down on paper?
3. How did you go about choosing your subject?

### AFTER THEY WROTE

1. How did you go about writing this?
2. What are you going to do next with this piece of writing?
3. What do you think of this piece of writing?

Although these questions were asked in standard, formal fashion, Giacobbe didn't hesitate to ask further questions that promised additional information.

Two of the ten children are now reported to show more detailed profiles of child change in writing. The two children are chosen from the high and low groups to show contrast. Teachers will see the types of information questions elicit as well as well as changes within and between the two children. Each case is reported in the three most important sections to monitor child change through questions: information, process, and standard.

Although all the small changes between the two dates in December and May are not available, the information will be discussed in light of data from our study of children's composing from ages six through nine (see Language Arts Research Update 1978-1981).

## MARK

Mark was chosen in December to represent the lower group of children. At that time he was barely able to read his invented spellings. It was not easy for him to talk about his work or writing; composing was a slow process where he struggled for the right letters to spell out his pieces.

### INFORMATION

In December Mark is asked what he would be writing about. As in speech he goes directly to the subject:

> "School . . . writing and building and all that.
> Math, science, art."

When Mark composes he has to lead into his subject from home base, a home to school narrative, a practice quite common in December with other children. Mark writes:

> I am in the house.
> We are going to school.
> Mrs. Young dropped off the other kids at
> the Academy.
> We are going to Rockwell. (His school, next
> stop on bus run from Academy.)
> We are getting off the bus.
> I am playing.
> The End.

Mark's entire text gets him to the subject discussed orally. It is difficult for any writer to get into a subject. Noting how writers get into their subjects is a fruitful way to view the change of writers at any age.

By June Mark's use of specifics has changed dramatically, both in his pre-conception of what will be contained in the writing, and in the writing itself. The same question asked in December about what will be contained in his writing brings a different harvest:

> Chicks . . . I might just write like what I know about chicks and I might write that one just hatched at about eleven past ten. I might write the day that it hatched. I might write that a chick just hatched a couple of days ago. . . that a chick hatched last night. I'll keep on thinking about it and I'll just think and I'll find out what I'm going to write.

Mark's sense of options changes from December to June. He is now familiar enough with both writing and his subject, "chicks", that he might exercise any of these options in writing: what he knows about chicks, the one that just hatched at eleven past ten, the day it hatched, or the chick that hatched last night. Any time children speak of different directions in content, process, or standards, there is evidence of a significant growth unit. Once children realize there are options before them in information or process, they take on greater problem solving capacities, as well as greater access to the specifics that make their writing more detailed.

In June, with his sense of many options and rich information, Mark moves quickly to his subject when he writes:

> A chick hatched on Tuesday. The whole class was happy. I was happy the first chick hatched. I wanted to hold it but it was too small. You have to wait for two days when you can hold them. They will nibble at your finger. In two days they will nibble. It doesn't hurt when they nibble. One chick nibbled my finger until my finger got a cut. The cut didn't hurt. I was scared when he nibbled at my finger. We are trying to hatch eggs in our school but they hatched on yesterday, June 2, 1981. The chicks are wet when they hatch. If you wait for two days they will be grey. They will be fluffy too. That is when it is fun to hold them. I holded a chick. I had never holded a chick. It felt weird. It squiggled. It got out of my hands. I chased it all around John's house for a half hour. Finally he finally it stopped. It was too tired to run anymore. I finally got the chick. It tried to get away again and it almost did but it didn't get away. The End.

Mark's text follows in many directions with each sentence stimulating the next. His understanding of options doesn't mean he entertains one in the midst of four. Rather, Mark find that each sentence mysteriously leads to the next; there is usually an option around the corner to be followed. Although Mark expresses what he will write as optional, in fact, he uses all of his options in the text. This is a necessary precursor to the child's stopping and making a decision about which option to entertain in the midst of composing. Thus, Mark's statement of options or "might" is really a statement of the suspected twists and turns in his piece about chicks.

Mark is able to show himself more in the June piece. His voice is present in feelings, surprise at what the chicks do: pecking, sqiggling, running around the house. Mark has more access to himself in June than in December.

PROCESS

The first element in Mark's process of writing is the process he uses to choose his subject. Note the difference from December to June:

| December | June |
|---|---|
| I just wanted to write that. Cause I like school. It just came to my head. | I just thought about what we've done. I thought about dinosaurs first. And I thought about butterflies and chicks. We studied about food and shells. Then I decided the chick one. |

In June Mark has chosen one of six options for his topic. He is used to the question, to having access to how he goes about choosing his topic. Children who have such options rarely see themselves as being without a writing subject. Best of all, they learn to exercise intelligent choice on subject limitation. They learn about what they know.

Giacobbe found out more about Mark's process by asking him about his composing before and after writing. Before writing, Mark said, in December:

> I'm just going to take the paper and write it down. And then I'll write the picture of it. I write the picture first and then I write about the picture because I like to write the picture first because if I mess up I can just make something out of it. If I mess up with crayons I already drawed on something I can make that part of it.

Mark already has a clear sense of process in December. He is aware that he draws (before he actually composes) and that he is able to transform drawing errors into sensible solutions. He also makes little distinction between the process of drawing and writing, a common understanding of many children Mark's age. He writes them both.

In June Mark's statements about process appear to be regressive. Now that he does little drawing to go with the writing, his language seems vague in comparision with December.

> Before. How he will write: "I don't know . . . in words. That's all I can think of for now."
>
> After: How he did write: "First I thought what I was going to write and I just thought and thought."

Children Mark's age consistently move from specifics about the process to such general statements as: "I thought and thought" as they develop greater internal language. It isn't long before the general statement "thinking" is replaced by more specifics about the process again. "Thinking" comes at the point when children use less speaking to accompany the writing process, yet they lack for words to describe the internal process. They are just aware of a change that can only be expressed as "thinking". Later, they will see an external counterpart in what they actually do to describe their writing processes.

The future, however, is much more definite. When Mark is asked what he will do with his piece in June, there is great difference from his December statement: "Publish it." In short, the piece is done at the time of interview. In June, Mark has a continuing sense of what will be done with his writing:

> Probab;y get it published. I might sit down and work on it a little bit. Turn it over and erase the things on the back that I have and write some new stuff. Write new stuff about chicks. I might take this piece and just look through and see if it's chicks or ducks cause I had to chase one of John's ducks too. That even took more than an hour. I might change some of it to ducks.

The future is open. Mark will go back to rework his piece with some adjustments needed in the information. The piece still exists for more work.

Giacobbe has carefully developed a future for the children by asking them throughout the year, "And now what will you do with your piece?" But the question has come after continuing to have a conference about what the child still knows about the topic even though the child has "completed" the piece. It is the child's choice whether the information is used or not. Of course the child's time frame of working on the process changes as a result of such procedures. The piece about the classroom in December took one sitting whereas "Chicks" was carefully composed over three days. Even though the piece took longer in June, Mark still has more to say about what he will continue to do with his writing.

## STANDARDS

At the end of each interview, Mark is asked how he feels about his piece. Much of his standard in December is taken from the comments and help given by others:

> I think it's good. Because when I conferenced with Justin they said it's good. They thought it should be published too.

He gives few specifics of his own about why it is good. It is good enough to be published. (About one in four booklets composed by the children are published in hard cover in the room. This amounts to an average of one book every four weeks for each child in the school year.)

In June Mark had a much more elaborative statement about his thoughts on the quality of his writing:

> I think it's good. It's one of the best pieces I have. When I read it through it sounds good. When I read through all my pieces, they all sound good.

Mark had just completed a strong, fantasy piece called "The Great Race." He is feeling that most of his selections are good after having two good ones in a row. Mark then goes on to make another statement about standards, one quite typical of children six through nine years of age, who are wrestling with issues of "real-unreal".

> This is better than "The Great Race" because it has more information. Anyways, that didn't really happen in "Great Race." I just imagined all of that. This is better because it is a real story. Real things really happened. Make-up things didn't really happen.

For children coming to terms with what is real, not real, true, untrue, the "real", the new realization, takes on greater importance and therefore greater merit as a written piece for Mark.

## LAUREN

Lauren was chosen as one of the subjects because in December she composed in the more advanced group in the class. She was articulate in speaking about writing and the writing process.

## INFORMATION

In December Lauren tells far more than she writes. By June she has shifted to writing more than she tells. At first Lauren used the response to the question, "What will you write?" as a rehearsal for the text composed. In December there is little difference between Lauren's oral response and what she composed on the first page:

| Oral: (December) | Written: (December) |
|---|---|
| Well, one time when we were coming home from our boat and Candace was going to sleep over my house we couldn't do it cause I was getting too crabby. Then my brother was allowed and he fell down the stairs with his tape recorder and his book and he broke his wrist. | Once when we were coming back from the boat Candace was going to sleep over my house but I was too crabby. Then Bobby fell down the stairs. He slept over anyways. He went to my house. Then he went to the doctor and got a cast on. |

Lauren selects only the material *first* shared in telling about what will be in writing. Forty-eight of the seventy-three words written in the selection came from the first 75 words of the oral account of what would be written even though Lauren shared 246 total words of what would happen in her writing. Part of this is because Lauren, like many primary children, started out with great detail on the first page (47 words) but ran out of energy, and quickly closed in traditional fashion with simple subject, verb, object sentences:

HE CAN RIDE HIS BIKE.

BOBBY IS BETTER NOW.

BOBBY IS AT SCHOOL.

HE CAME BACK FROM SCHOOL.

Each of these sentences occupies only four or five words to the page. They are a similar pattern to Mark's lead from home to school and back again with only one sentence about school itself.

In June there is much less of Lauren's oral account in the writing. Like Mark, as will be shown in the process section, she is aware that she will discover new options in the composing; an oral rehearsal is much less needed. Table I shows the shift from oral to written:

TABLE I - PRECENTAGE OF ORAL IN WRITTEN
DECEMBER AND JUNE.

| | No. words in oral account | Word information units in writing from oral | Word length of written account | % of written made up from oral account |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| December | 246 | 48 | 73 | 66 |
| June | 153 | 35 | 129 | 27 |

Even though Lauren's genre had changed from a narrative account to an informational - "all about" writing, she takes the information and a attempts to have small narratives within the article about her family boat. Each page has an illustration to go with it.

ABOUT MY BOAT

p. 1 - My boat is neat. I like my boat. Under a cushion ther's a toilet under it.

p. 2 - We go on my boat in the summer. Our boat isn't next to their boat. There's another boat between them.

p.3 - One time our friends came on our boat. Sometimes when they go out with us.

p. 4 - We have a new marina. They put the docks out.
My father is putting the boat into the water.
I asked my mom if we could go on the boat tomorrow.
She said maybe we could.

p. 5 - I like my boat. Our boat has a hatch. Sometimes
I stick my head out the hatch. But sometimes my
father tells me to put my head back.

p. 6 - There is a sink in our boat. We went on the boat
yesterday.

There is an epi-narrative of her friends, the new dock and the hatch. There is no strong narrative or coherent approach to writing about her boat. Different features have their personal appeal, the toilet, the marina, friends, the hatch and the sink in the boat. The piece unfolds, and in a sense is less coherent than the December narrative. Working with a non-narrative account is much more difficult, however, especially when the writer tries to put in personal voice.

**PROCESS**

Process statements give the strongest indications of Lauren's growth as a writer. Note the change from December to June in her two accounts of how she will compose:

| DECEMBER | JUNE |
|---|---|
| Keep on adding pages. I might have a problem if I get mixed up. Yeah, I would. But I don't think I will. Maybe tomorrow I'll have time to do the whole thing, instead of doing other things like clay. | I might add or I just might take some out. I just might write the pages. If I ran into problems I could just think what we really did and erase that and put what we really did. Sometimes I get mixed up. I'm really not thinking. |

In December Lauren chooses to complete all writing in one sitting. "Maybe tomorrow I'll have time to do the whole thing." This also shows why her big splurge of information on page one was followed by such simple sentences with data less relevant to her topic. She had exceeded her time limit set for writing. The only way out was to end the piece in simple sentences.

In June there are more specifics to Lauren's process. Lauren might "add, take out, erase, rewrite, (but what we really did"). In the developmental hierarchy of writing "taking out" information is an advanced concept. It is not unusual for children to cite addition of information, subtraction is another matter. This means that a child has decided something is irrelevant to the main idea. By June Lauren has a much richer problem statement, whereas in December "she might run into problems but probably won't". When children come up with options in information or process, they also come up with much richer statements about anticipated problems. The two must go together or the writer will be in great difficulty. There are too many children who are strong readers who can cite many problems options but are without the information and process options. That situation usually leads to a child who is very unhappy with writing.

Lauren's statement about how she actually composed in June shows even more about her understanding of process:

> I forgot to put in my mother. I forgot to put that so I had to erase for more room. I had more information but it was hard to put in. I put an arrow up here to say that. I saw you (Giacobbe) do that when you showed the boys and girls what you do when you leave something out of your writing.

Lauren has picked up on her teacher's strategies for inserting information and applied them to her own writing on a self-directed basis.

Lauren has also expanded the time-space dimensions of her process understandings. First, she composes over a longer period in June (three days as opposed to one day). Second, she returns to reexamine the text to insert new information. Third, even at the point of the interview for this study she still has designs on how she will continue to work with her piece: She still wants to check to see if it is "mixed up" in any way. To check this problem she will take the staple out of the corner of the papers, spread the papers on the floor, and look from page to page to put the information in the right order.

**STANDARD**

In December Lauren feels the piece is good because, "I like it. I really want to publish it because it's about the best so far. I like it. It's a good book. It's good because I just thought about it this minute and it's good." Like most children starting out, Lauren thinks it is good because she just "feels" it is the best. She is not yet conscious of criteria to apply to the piece. Teachers need to be cautious about children's understanding of what is good. Even though children can not come up with specific criteria as to what is best, they usually do choose the best paper. Criteria come after they are able to choose best papers.

Lauren's standard in June has more specifics with some understanding of the effect of her piece on the other children.

> I like it a lot. It makes me feel good. That's what makes it a good piece but it may not be to other people, (Thinks it is important that it be good to other people.) It is good because it has a lot of information in it. I told a lot about my boat. I think I want to write even more.

Lauren has introduced feeling as a criteria but with feeling backed by information. She also has a sense of continuing standard since she wishes to keep working on her piece to make it better.

## FINAL REFLECTION

Teachers ask questions to find out how children change. Questions about the writing process show how children change most because responses are rooted in the underpinings of child thinking and development. Children's perceptions of what they write and how they write it are data teachers can't do without.

The challenge to the teacher is makeing sense of the information the children give when responding to questions. Will the teacher know growth when it is present, even though the child may be struggling with his piece? Teachers should look for: the child's use of detail, ability to talk about the subject, sense of option, tentativeness of judgement, growing language to talk about the process of writing.

Questions themselves contribute to child growth if asked on a regular basis. Most of the questions, however, are asked because the teacher feels the child knows the answer. Although Giacobbe's question activity in writing conferences between December and June is not part of this study, the use of questions in conference is a regular pattern in her teaching. Her records show regular conference with children (about three per week). Conferences are spent in receiving, discussing and questioning the children about their work. The object is to help children teach her about their subjects and to discuss the process by which they compose. Form our previous study (see Language Arts, Research Update, 1979-1981) it is clear that the conference, plus questions, produce reflection and a language of option and process in the children.

Children grow because they become aware of what they are doing, then forge on to tackle new issues in their composing. Questions make an important contribution to that awareness. Teachers become aware of where the child is from the questions and ask further stretching questions. Children, in turn, become more confident about where they are in the writing process, and take on more challenging issues in their composing.

"Romance Precedes Precision" - Marion Caroselli

by *our* fascination with language, they cannot help but be captivated by the wonder of words. This wonder invariably leads to a desire to perfect expression, to use language with precision, to become a connoisseur.

Approximating Whitehead's stages of mental development, the practices that follow have been grouped according to grade levels. The section dealing with activities for the primary grades reflects the "romantic" approach; it describes methods of developing interest in language. In the activities for the intermediate grades, the reader will encounter ideas for helping children acquire precision in the use of language. And in the section for the junior high school grades, teaching practices that will assist students to generalize and to make applications of their knowledge are delineated.

## Primary Grades

First-grade students at the Aloha Park Elementary School in Beaverton, Oregon, make their own books based on the reading of a story by their teacher, Barbara M. Getty. After Ms. Getty's students have heard the story, they cut and paste a picture to indicate their favorite part of the story. Once the picture is glued to a sheet of construction paper, the children write their own stories about the cut-and-paste picture.

Sixth graders are invited to join the class during the writing period to help the first graders with spelling or other writing problems. In some cases, Ms. Getty writes the story as the child dictates it. Once the stories are completed, the children staple their own stories to their pictures.

At the end of the day, the children form a circle on the rug. Some children read their own stories and present their pictures. When requested to do so, the teacher reads some of the stories. The next morning, as children enter the classroom, they select their own pictures and attached stories and tack them on the cork strip in the corridor for the entire building to enjoy.

"If anyone had told me two or three years ago that first grade children could write and read their own stories during the first quarter of any school year, without benefit of many months of formal reading instruction, I would have considered the idea ridiculous!" writes Helen Reynolds of the Atkinson Academy in Atkinson, New Hampshire. Like Ms. Getty, she has discovered that young children sufficiently awakened to the romance of using words can produce pieces of writing which, in time, become more and more precise. The process that she describes reflects Donald Graves' comments cited in the first chapter of the monograph regarding teachers' estimation of what children can and should do during the first week of school:

On the very first day of school, I begin by giving each child a large piece of newsprint, crayons, and a pencil. I ask the children to "write" something to me. It can be anything that they wish. I do not specify, because I want to see what word "write" means to them and also what their capabilities are.

As I circulate around the room, stopping to give words of encouragement or a smile to an apprehensive child, I can observe many things: a name scrawled across the whole paper; large sized numbers; various upper and lower case letters of the alphabet, some reversed and/or upside down; scribbles; criss-crossed lines; bright colors; stilted pictures and action pictures; and some words like *dog*, *cat*, and *love*. Each paper shows me many levels of maturity, development, and knowledge and can be used at a later time to group children of similar ability. Some children are "all done" in less than five minutes, while others show a longer attention span. As each child finishes, I encourage that the paper be shared with me and I jot down what the child tells me. Then I stamp the day's date on it and we tack it up on our bulletin board, which has been divided to give each child a place where future writings will be displayed.

Drawing is writing to young children; it is also talking out a story and sharing it with someone. Their drawings and the knowledge of six to ten consonants are enough to help children get the flow of writing. As their knowledge of initial and final consonants, blends, and vowels begins to turn into words, words into phrases, and phrases into complete thoughts, real stories evolve. Each day there is a time for all to write and each piece is dated, shared, and then added to their collections.

The stages of growth and improvement are very evident to anyone who reads the child's earliest to latest writings. As the teacher, I show that I am affected by what the child has to offer and this in turn gives the child added incentive to continue writing.

Most children do not realize their own potential. We have never before asked them to write so early. Now they just conclude that they *can* do it . . . and do!

John Gaydos of the Atkinson Academy in Atkinson, New Hampshire, employs sensing of an audience for the writing to lure the recalcitrant writer to the romance of writing. Mr. Gaydos depicts the process in his own words:

With a second grader, Mark, I was stymied because the rest of the class seemed to be flowing and he was still clogged up. Mark would consistently explain his lack of writing by saying that he didn't know how to spell. Mark's school background had consisted of considerable prewriting and writing activities, but he was out of synch with his peers. The elements of a normal sequence that beginning writers go through—prewriting (drawing, rehearsing, storytelling), invented spelling (experimenting with a minimal number of phonic elements to write stable recognizable words), and authorship (recognition and concern with audiences) —were all bearing on Mark with equal force and negatively affecting his ability to communicate a story in any form. In typical second grade fashion, he was obviously discovering the audience. He would anxiously begin his turn in a group sharing session with a lot of enthusiasm, but would quickly stop. Mark wanted the audience badly, but he didn't have a story to share, only beginnings.

In individual conferences I would press for getting the written word on paper but what I really needed to work on was content; the audience would be with him if he could tell a good story. I had mistakenly made a rule that said in order to share with the whole group, one had to have some written material started. Revoking the rule freed Mark to work solely on the content; now he could work on getting to his audience with a whole story.

Mark started his next story, "The Flood," with the understanding that when he had finished just the pictures he could share it with the whole group. Mark worked quickly at first, then slowed, but two individual conferences and one small group conference later, Mark had finished his illustrations. After hearing Mark tell his story, the group reacted very positively, some not believing Mark had actually done it. The more important fact was that Mark really knew he had captured an audience solely because of his story rather than because of his more typical aberrant behaviors.

Once Mark had, on his own, made a concrete connection to a sound/symbol relationship, he was ready to make an initial mental commitment to writing. Phonetically he had always had enough elements to record all he wanted to say, but it was his making a concrete tie between his phonics skills and the whole communication process that made Mark begin to flow. Mark's next story was written first and then illustrated.

I had grown, too. I had been seeking only written products and making pat assumptions about second graders' writing abilities rather than paying attention to individuals and the whole process of communicating.

Mary Ellen Giacobbe of the Atkinson Academy in Atkinson, New Hampshire, utilizes writing conferences in her first grade writing program. She stresses pupils' competencies as she confers with them. By giving positive attention to the skills children have acquired, she is able to enhance their positive feelings about writing and about themselves:

> During a writing conference, the child reads the piece. I retell the story giving the writer the opportunity to say, "Yes, that's the way it is," or "No, you don't understand." I do not interfere by giving my ideas. Instead, I ask questions that enable the writer to rethink the content. "What do you think about your story? What is the best part? Why? Are there any other details that you can add? What are you going to do next with this piece of writing?" The writer then has the choice to rewrite or not to rewrite.
>
> Once the content is the way the writer wants it to be, I focus on reading and mechanical skills. I mention all the things that the child was able to do. Then I choose one skill to work on. I record what happened during the conference in the writer's journal, as in this example:
>
> *December 15*
>
> Amy read *The Chipmunk*. She [illegible] She put a period at the end of each sentence. She remembered *ing* and used it in the word coming. We talked about *sh*. She wrote show, shop, ship and fisn.
>
> On the first page of the journal is a growing list of skills that the writer has acquired. It might look like this:
>
> *Things Amy Can Do:*
> 1. Amy can put her name of the piece of writing.
> 2. Amy can put the date on the piece of writing.
> 3. Amy can put a period at the end of each sentence.
> 4. Amy can put *s* at the end of a word to mean more than one.
>
> Because Amy used *ing* correctly, I would add this to her list. On future pieces of writing, Amy is responsible for paying special attention to the skills on her list. When Amy has a conference, I help her by saying, "Check numbers 2 and 4 in your journal and then reread what you have written and make any necessary corrections."
>
> I am not responsible for content or red penciling all the errors. The child is given the opportunity to take increasing responsibility for individual writing and learning.

Andrea Giuffre of School #4 in Rochester, New York, uses writing to determine if children have understood certain historic concepts and facts. Andrea believes that if a student can take the facts, assume the role of an individual who lived in a given historical era, and tell a story set in that era, then the child has demonstrated a command of the historical concepts. Ms. Giuffre describes the procedure this way:

decides to make an alphabet book about imaginary insects that will be placed in the school library. Each student is responsible for a four-line poem with a rhyming pattern of AABB; each student is assigned a certain letter of the alphabet and selects an original but pronounceable name for an insect beginning with this letter.

Before actually writing, the children jot down several descriptions and actions they might want to include. It is pointed out that the poems are actually mini-stories and that—while a story might be wild and crazy—each line should lead to a logical conclusion. The first line includes the bug's name and tells something about the appearance, personality, or habitat. Lists of rhyming words are compiled to assist students with subsequent lines.

Following the composing stage, peer evaluation is used for the editing stage. Children share their work with each other and receive suggestions for improvement from each other. They also submit names for titles which are later voted upon.

The poems are typed and children draw their illustrations. After the books have been "printed," each child receives two copies. The library is given a copy of "A Bugwalk through the Alphabet," and the remaining copies are sold. The beginning of the Bugwalk follows:

*A* is for Affenter

An affenter is found down near the sea;
He gurgles with his mouth and drinks with his knee.
When he drinks cherry soda, his leg is in the glass,
And *he* still thinks he's got a lot of class.

In an effort to encourage student writers to become more precise in their written expression, Patricia Howard of the Atkinson Academy in Atkinson, New Hampshire, involves her students in sharing and critiquing each other's work:

> In writing, as in other disciplines, children can learn as well from their peers as from a teacher. I have set aside a large carpeted area in my fifth-grade classroom for what we have come to call "share." It is here that a child reads his or her story or draft and asks for comments. This special area removes the aura of the classroom setting, and becomes a place for the exchange of ideas.
>
> The first time my class came to "share," they were apprehensive about reading their stories. As we sat in a large circle on the rug, I explained the purpose of sharing and we discussed some rules. We would sit quietly with our papers on the floor, listen only to the person reading, raise our hands, etc. Only a few children were willing to read, but I knew this was only the

beginning. I called on someone who could accept criticism and we began our learning through sharing.

Steve read his piece and I raised my hand. "I loved the part when you said your stomach felt like a drum." Steve chose a friend to comment. "That's a super story!" Other positive comments followed. Then came a question about the sequence of events. Suddenly several hands went up, each child offering a suggestion to Steve. The class then realized the importance of revision in making their stories even better.

The children now insist on "share" for about twenty minutes after each writing period. I am able to sit back and wait for them to comment and question before interjecting my thoughts. So many of the pieces, however, offer such excellent learning experiences that I zero right in on them. "How did you feel when. . . ? Can you tell me that in your story? Doesn't your story really begin when ?" These are but a few model questions I ask during our conferencing "share." Very soon the children ask them of not only the writer, but of themselves as they are writing.

Teaching writing through conference type sharing is easy since the children don't suspect that I am "teaching." It's fun for them and they take the information and incorporate it in their stories without even realizing that we have just had a lesson in writing.

Whitehead asserts that from the age of eleven on, children are most receptive to seeking and acquiring a precise knowledge of language. The study of literature, composing, and the elements of language should receive focus during this period of precision when a child is developing skills to perfect writing and reading. Critical thinking and listening skills should also be stressed during this period.

Sylvia Levinson, who reads stories over a period of weeks to her fifth graders at the Burtsfield Elementary School in West Lafayette, Indiana, helps her students to acquire proficiency in each of these skill areas with assignments such as this one, based on Scott O'Dell's *The Island of the Blue Dolphins:*

The book was read to the class by the teacher over a period of six weeks. Vocabulary was studied and discussions were held in conjunction with the reading. Creative and critical thinking and listening skills were stressed. Five movies depicting the sea and animal life typical of the book's setting were shown. The assignment, made as the book was nearly finished, was to write a complete description of one of the many exciting adventures and difficult problems Karana experiences. Suggested topics included "A Meeting with Strangers," "Enemy Turned Friend," "Attacked by Wild Dogs," "Caught in the Earthquake," "Alone and Afraid," "Rescued."

## SPELLING EVOLUTIONS

### TONI'S GROWTH

| | |
|---|---|
| 10/17 | D - and |
| | D |
| 10/23 | ND |
| 10/25 | AD |
| 11/10 | ND |
| | LA |
| | ANE |
| 11/16 | AND |
| 11/18 | ND |
| 11/28 | AND |
| 12/1 | AND |
| 12/8 | AND |

• • •

| | |
|---|---|
| 11/28 | BN - bunny |
| 2/12 | BUNE |

| | |
|---|---|
| 2/12 | GG - egg |
| 2/27 | GG |
| | UGG |
| | EGG |

| | |
|---|---|
| 11/10 | LC - like |
| | LAT - liked |
| 12/8 | LOCT - liked |
| 12/19 | L - like |
| 4/10 | LICT - liked |
| | LIC - like |
| 5/14 | LIKE |
| 5/21 | LIKE |

| | |
|---|---|
| 11/3 | LV - of |
| 11/16 | V |
| 11/18 | V |
| 2/26 | IV |
| 3/25 | UV |
| 3/20 | FO |

| | |
|---|---|
| 11/3 | N - on |
| 11/18 | IN |
| 1/29 | ON |
| 3/5 | ON |

| | |
|---|---|
| 12/8 | PLA - play |
| 12/16 | PLA |
| 1/12 | PLAD - played |
| 1/15 | PAY |
| 1/23 | PAY |
| 2/15 | PAY |
| 2/27 | PLAY |
| 3/9 | PLAY |
| 3/12 | PLAY |
| 5/21 | PLAY |

| | |
|---|---|
| 12/12 | PRET - pretty |
| 1/2 | PRET |
| 2/15 | PETE |
| 2/21 | PRETEE |

| | |
|---|---|
| 10/23 | RIS - rains |
| 12/12 | RAN -rain |
| 1/12 | ROI |
| 1/15 | REN |
| 2/5 | RAN |

| | |
|---|---|
| 11/28 | SCOL - school |
| 12/16 | SCOL |
| 1/23 | SKL |
| 1/29 | SCOL |
| 3/9 | SCOOL |
| 3/28 | SCOOL |

| | |
|---|---|
| 12/8 | WOST - wished |
| 2/6 | WES - wish |
| | WS |
| 3/20 | WESH |
| 3/28 | WESH |

## SPELLING EVOLUTIONS

### SARAH'S GROWTH

| | |
|---|---|
| 1/24 | AKT - asked |
| 3/20 | ASKT |
| 4/10 | ASKED |

| | |
|---|---|
| 11/3 | AVVETAG - everything |
| 11/6 | AVVETAG |
| 1/31 | EVERYTHING |

| | |
|---|---|
| 11/20 | FLLAOWZ - flowers |
| | FLLAWRZ |
| | FLLAWR - flower |
| 1/11 | FLAWRS |
| 6/1 | FLOWERS |

| | |
|---|---|
| 11/7 | GON - gone |
| 11/29 | GON |
| 12/15 | GOEN |
| 1/25 | GONE |
| 2/27 | GONE |
| 4/3 | GONE |

| | |
|---|---|
| 10/23 | HAOS - house |
| 11/3 | HOOS |
| 12/15 | HOES |
| 1/15 | HOSE |
| 1/24 | HOUS |
| 1/30 | HOSE |
| 2/27 | HOUSE |
| 3/8 | HOUSE |
| 3/16 | HOUSES |
| 5/28 | HOSE |

| | |
|---|---|
| 10/23 | NO - know |
| 11/7 | NOW |
| 12/14 | KNOW |
| 3/26 | KNOW |
| 5/28 | KNOWS - knows |

| | |
|---|---|
| 11/15 | MAICH - much |
| 11/17 | MAH |
| 11/27 | MACH |
| 12/7 | MACH |
| 1/18 | MUCH |
| 1/23 | MUCH |

. . .

| | |
|---|---|
| 11/6 | NET - neat |
| | NAET |
| 11/7 | NET |
| 11/15 | NET |
| 11/15 | NET |
| 11/29 | NEAT |

| | |
|---|---|
| 11/6 | SLLE - silly |
| 11/15 | SALLE |
| 11/17 | SALEE |
| 12/7 | SALEE |
| 1/3 | SILLEY |
| 3/15 | SILLY |
| | SILLY WILLY |
| 3/26 | SILLY |

| | |
|---|---|
| 11/7 | TGK - think |
| 11/27 | TAK |
| 12/1 | THIEK |
| 12/7 | TANGK |
| | TAINK |
| 1/18 | THINGK |
| 2/27 | THENGK |
| 3/12 | THIGK |
| 3/16 | THIGK |

| | |
|---|---|
| 11/6 | HOL - whole |
| 1/18 | WHOO |
| 5/16 | WHOLE |

Rebecca Rule
June 1981

# CONCEPT DESCRIPTIONS

## CODE FOR CONCEPT COLLECTION

### SD Standard

The speaker judges or asks for a judgement of a piece of writing.

Examples: "I like the way you set this up."

"Which do you think is the best draft?"

SD is often found with other concepts when those other concepts are being used as standards. The statement "I like the way you set this up" would be coded SD O, meaning that the concept of organization is being used as a judgement standard.

### P Process

The speaker discusses the steps taken to produce a draft. These may be specific:

Examples: "This is my fifth draft."

"Did you copy this out of the encyclopedia or make it up yourself?"

or general:

Examples: "What will you do next?"

"Was it hard to write this draft?"

P is probably the most prevalent symbol in the system and is often found in combination with other concepts. Use of the future tense in a teacher or researcher question is often a cue that process is being dicussed as in the statements "What will you do next?" and "How will you change the organization in the next draft?"

### I Information

Many of the concepts in this system include what most of us consider the concept of information. For example, our concept O for organization means organizing information. We've decided to allow the O to stand for organizing information so that the I symbol can stand

2

for something more specific. That is, although we know that a statement like "I'm going to put all the stuff about dogs in Chapter I" includes an understanding both of information and organization, we will use the O alone to symbolize that understanding. The same applies for the symbols MO, FE. AC. T, EX and AU.

The "something more specific" that we want I to stand for is defined as follows:

The speaker discusses or cites content, refers specifically to a piece of writing.

Example: "I'm going to write how the man got down here. The shark is going to touch the sailboat..."

The above example would be coded both I and P because the writer cites specific information while describing her planned writing process.

### Is Selection of Information

The speaker refers to selection of information, distinguishes suitable from unsuitable information but does not speak specifically of adding or deleting information . (See next two catagories).

Example: "What kind of information do you need?"

### Is Addition of Information

The speaker suggests adding to a draft.

Examples: "Revised means adding some tips."

"I think you should put in more about the car ride."

### Id Deletion of Information

The speaker refers to deleting information.

Examples: "I didn't think it was that important and it was just a waste of time having it there."

"Do you think you really need that part?"

Some other categories which include (implicitly) the concept of information follow.

EX Experience

The writer describes his experience, or the reader discusses the writer's (off the page) experience.

Example: "The chickens were hard to catch."

"Was there a roller-coaster there?"

Discussions of experience as defined here may be stimulated by what appeared on the page but are not about the writing or what's on the page. Often, the writer seems to talk about the experience (or the reader expresses curiosity) with no indication that the speaker thinks the writing should be changed as a result of the discussion.

EXv Experience verifiaction

Speaker compares information on the page with the writer's experience.

Example: "Is that really true?"

"That's exactly what happened."

"I can't remember whether the doctor put the needle in my left or my right arm so I don't know what to write."

AU Audience

Speaker refers to reader response to writing or to a conference.

Example: "What do you think Billy would say about this story?"

AUi Audience general response

Speaker notes that writing is (is not) interesting, exciting, appealing, or entertaining.

Example: "I like it because it is the exciting part."

AUio Audience response with regard to others

Speaker notes that writing is (is not) interesting, exciting, appealing, or entertaining to others.

Example: "Well, I like it but the other kids would say it's boring."

### AUc Audience feels writing needs clarity

Speaker suggests that the writing be clarified.

Examples: "What did you mean by...?"

"I'm having trouble with this page. It doesn't make sense to me."

### AUco Audience requests clarity with regard to others

Speaker suggest writing be clarified for other other readers to better understand it.

Examples: "It is important so they know she was wasting food by dumping it on the floor."

"It sounded like he didn't care about your sister."

### AUn Audience not considered important to writer

Speaker explicitly expresses no concern with reader response.

Examples: "Your Woodsy Owl book doesn't make any sense."

"That's all right. I can write whatever I want."

### F Feelings

Speaker refers to emotion in the writing or the experience behind the writing.

Example: "Now what I have to figure out is how with that same feeling I could bring my father to the sofa."

"Were you unhappy when you didn't find your luggage?"

### MO - Motivation

Speaker discusses writer's or writer's characters' motives in the experience behind the text or in the text.

Examples: "Why did you ask for more potato?"

"I walked to the window because I wanted them to notice me."

AC Action

ACa refers to sequence of events in narrative.

Examples: "What will happen next in your story?"

"I just wanted to start at the action."

ACf refers to frequency of event in story.

Examples: "I like your story because it has a lot of action."

"The robbing in my story has a lot of action."

O Organization

Speaker refers to content arrangement. Includes any reference to grouping, ordering, chapters, division into parts, etc.

Example: "I wanted each chapter to be about just one thing."

"Why did you make chapters?"

T Topic

Speaker refers to what the whole piece is about, defining message or intent and reference to titles.

Examples: "This whole thing is about my trip to Canada."

"Is this about red squirrels?"

L Language

Speaker refers to writer's choice or arrangement of words for meaning.

Example: "Why did you call the lion 'ferocious'?

"What should I call the box cars?"

### LG Length

LGm

Speaker refers to how long a piece is. Emphasis is more is better.

Examples: "This is a good story 'cause it tells more and it has a lot of pages."

"This is the longest story you've ever written."

LGs

Speaker refers to how short a piece is. Emphasis is less is better.

Examples: "I don't want a super long story because I don't need all that much in."

"You've told a lot in a short space."

### N Neatness

Speaker refers to the work's appearance.

Examples: "Don't look at this. It's too messy."

"You wrote this very neatly."

### M Mechanics

Speaker refers to grammar, punctuation, spelling or handwriting.

Examples: "Is that how you spell *much*?

"If I send a love letter, I use cursive."

## COMPUTER PRINTOUTS

## GREG

```
F  9/08/78   700002  G: HAVE TO KNOW WHAT BOOK WILL BE       6    [P
                     CALLED. WHAT IT WILL SAY. PRACTICE A         SD]
                     LOT. PRACTICE IN ONE BOOK. PUT IT IN         T
                     ANOTHER. XEROX IT.                           I
                                                                  P
                                                                  W
F 10/20/78   700003  G: THIS IS THE END OF THE SENTENCE.     6    P
                     THEN I'M GONG TO CHOOSE ...                  W
F 11/06/78   700006  (GREG WANTED NINE MORE PAGES FOR HIS    6    [#P
                     STAR WARS BOOK.) G: I DON'T KNOW.            ACS]
                     YOU'LL HAVE TO SEE THE END.                  P
                                                                  ACS]
                                                                  W
F 11/10/78   700007  G: I GOT TO GO BACK. (MAKES OR          6    P
                     DARKENS PERIODS ON PREVIOUS PAGES.)          LG
                     OTHER KIDS WRITE SHORTER STORIES.            W
F 11/10/78   700009  G: I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO WRITE.          6    [P
                                                                  LG]
                                                                  #P
                                                                  W
F 11/10/78   700011  G: LOOK HOW LONG MY BOOK I'VE DONE      6    LGM
                     ALL THE WRITING IN THIS AREA.                P
                                                                  W
F 11/10/78   700186  G: IT'S ALL IN MY IMAGINATION. IF YOU   6    [#P
                     COME IN THIS AFTERNOON, YOU CAN SEE          ACS]
                     WHAT I WRITE.                                W
F 11/13/78   700014  G: MRS G. LOOK AT MY BOOK. I            6    AU
                     FINISHED.                                    P
                                                                  W
F 11/13/78   700183  G: NO. I STILL WANT TO PUBLISH STAR     6    [P]
                     WARS.                                        W
F 11/13/78   700276 G: GUESS WHAT I'M WRITING ABOUT?  THE    6    P
                    AQUARIUM.                                     T
                                                                  W
F 11/17/78   700278 G: ONE MORE PAGE.  WHAT SHOULD I WRITE   6    P
                    ABOUT?                                        T
                                                                  W?
F 11/20/78   700250 G: WE DON'T KNOW.                        6    [#P
                                                                  T]
                                                                  W
F 11/27/78   700016  G: BECAUSE IT'S NOT DONE YET.           6    [SD]
```

GREG (cont.)

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| F | 12/16/79 | 700136 | G: NO. I'M OUT OF SCIENCE EXPERIMENTS. I TRIED SOME BUT THEY JUST FUZZED IN THE AIR. I'M OUT OF SPACE BOOKS TOO. I'M BROKE. IF I COULD GO BACK TO THE OLD VERSION, I'D JUST ZIP IT UP A TITLE AND I'D BE GOING. | 6 | [P<br>I]<br>SD<br>P<br>T<br>W |
| F | 12/16/79 | 700137 | G: WHAT COULD BE A NEW VERSION OF THE MARTIANS? I KNOW HOW TO GET BACK TO THE OLD VERSION. I'D SAY, "WHY DON'T YOU GO BACK TO YOUR OLD VERSION?" | 6 | P<br>SD<br>AU<br>W |
| F | 12/16/79 | 700140 | G: I COULD MAYBE TRY IT ON HIM. I GIVE UP! I HAVE THE SAME PROBLEM WITH EVERYTHING. IF HE COULD LET ME DO THE OLD VERSION. OR IF HE COULD LET ME DO PICTURES. | 6 | AU<br>P<br>T<br>U<br>W |
| F | 12/16/79 | 700141 | G: UNLESS YOU CAN THINK OF ANY I DID LAST YEAR. I'M NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO WRITE ANYTHING. ACTUALLY. I'M GONE IF I DON'T THINK OF SOMETHING SOON. I WANT TO WRITE LIKE THE OLD VERSION. MAYBE IF I COULD PUT TOGETHER SOMETHING ON EARTH AND SPACE. | 6 | T<br>P<br>W |
| F | 12/16/79 | 700143 | G: BUT THAT WOULD TAKE DAYS. IN SPACE. A WAR THAT NO ONE WINS. I'D RATHER BE HOME. I CAN'T THINK. IF I CAN'T THINK, SO WHAT'S THE USE OF BEING IN SCHOOL. I CAN'T DO ANYTHING AROUND HERE. MY WRITING IS ALL BENT OUT OF SHAPE. I'VE BEEN THINKING FOR THREE DAYS. | 6 | P<br>T<br>SD<br>W |
| F | 12/16/79 | 700145 | G: YES. | 6 | [P<br>D]<br>W |
| | 12/16/79 | 700147 | G: NO. I MADE UP MY MIND. NO MORE DRAWING FOR ME. I'M JUST WASTING TIME. | 6 | [P<br>D]<br>W |
| F | 12/16/79 | 700149 | G: HE SAID NO MORE DRAWING FOR A FEW DAYS. AND I SAID NO MORE EVER! | 6 | [AU<br>P<br>D]<br>P<br>W |
| F | 12/16/79 | 700154 | G: I DON'T FEEL LIKE REVISING. I COULD MAKE A NEW VERSION. | 6 | P<br>W |

SUSIE

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q | 9/25/79 | 505214 | S: I DIDN'T WANT ANY CRYING IN IT. | 17 | P<br>IS<br>W |
| Q | 9/25/79 | 505216 | S: WELL, I DIDN'T CRY ALL THAT MUCH AND IF I DID PUT THE CRYING IN IT I'D HAVE TO PUT ABOUT MY MOTHER HOLDING ME. | 17 | [P<br>IS]<br>EXV<br>W |
| Q | 9/25/79 | 505218 | S: IT'S NOT THAT IMPORTANT, AND IT IS GOOD WITHOUT IT. IT'S DONE. | 17 | [IS]<br>SD<br>P<br>W |
| Q | 9/27/79 | 505209 | S: I TRIED A FIRST DRAFT AND I LIKED IT BUT I'M GOING TO DO ANOTHER AND SEE IF IT IS BETTER. | 17 | P<br>SD<br>W |
| Q | 9/27/79 | 505213 | S: I DON'T LIKE, "I GUESS, I SAID," AND I LIKE THE OTHER BEGINNING BECAUSE WHEN I FELL I DIDN'T KNOW MY HEAD HURT WHEN I KNEW WHAT HAPPENED. NOW I DON'T THINK I'LL EVEN CONTINUE ON MY SECOND DRAFT; I'LL TRY TO WORK ON MY FIRST DRAFT. AND I MAY NOT ADD THE LINE I PUT IN--"MY HEAD HURT AND I STARTED CRYING"--OR I MIGHT PUT IT DIFFERENT BECAUSE I WASN'T REALLY CRYING BECAUSE MY HEAD HURT; I WAS CRYING BECAUSE I WAS SURPRISED AND SCARED AT THE FALL. | 17 | [SD]<br>P<br>IS<br>NO<br>EXV<br>W |
| Q | 9/28/79 | 505220 | S: I MIGHT SAY, "I DIDN'T REALIZE WHAT I WAS DOING, AND I TURNED OVER. I WAS NOT WARM." AND THEN AT THE END, I'LL SAY SOMETHING. | 17 | P<br>I<br>X<br>W |
| Q | 9/28/79 | 505221 | S: I MIGHT SAY, "I TURNED OVER OFF THE BUNK." | 17 | P<br>IS<br>W |
| Q | 9/28/79 | 505222 | S: I DON'T KNOW IF IT IS ENOUGH TO JUST SAY, 'MOTHER HUGGED ME AND I FELT BETTER.' ONE HUG DOESN'T REALLY DO THAT MUCH. | 17 | P<br>IS<br>EXV<br>W |
| Q | 9/28/79 | 505223 | S: SO I MIGHT LEAVE "I WAS NOT WARM ANYMORE" OUT OR PUT IN OTHER WORDS. IT JUST DOESN'T FIT. I'LL TRY IT OUT--READ IT WITHOUT IT AND SEE WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE. | 17 | P<br>ID<br>IA<br>L<br>X<br>W |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | FORM." AND TAKE OUT THE "AMAZING." BUT I DON'T KNOW. | | |
| Q | 3/26/80 | 505514 | S: THEN I TRIED TO TELL HOW IT MOVES ALONG. (SHE READS THE LINE.) I THINK THAT IS HOW IT MOVED, AND I THINK HOW I CAN PUT HOW THICK IT IS. | 17 | P<br>I<br>W |
| Q | 3/26/80 | 505516 | S: AND I DON'T KNOW IF I HAVE TO SAY THIS IS ONLY ONE OF THE KINDS OF GLACIERS--THAT THERE ARE PIEDMONT GLACIERS. I MIGHT GO BACK AND PUT THE OTHER GLACIERS ARE CALLED PIEDMONT AND. . . | 17 | P<br>IS<br>W |
| Q | 4/08/80 | 505427 | S: I QUIT THE THING FOR MY SISTER BECAUSE EASTER IS OVER. I WAS THINKING IT WAS KIND OF BABYISH. | 17 | P<br>X<br>W |
| Q | 4/08/80 | 505428 | S: THEN I WAS GOING TO DO FRYING BANANAS--AFTER I BRAINSTORMED--BUT EVERYONE MIGHT COOK ONCE IN A WHILE. IT ISN'T VERY EXCITING. THEN I WAS GOING TO DO INSIDE A GLASS SPACESHIP WHICH WAS WHEN WE WENT ON A RIDE AT HERSHEY PARK, BUT, WELL, SOMETIMES, I DON'T KNOW, I GET IDEAS BEFORE I START WRITING IT EVEN, I GET GOOD IDEAS, AND THIS ONE I DIDN'T REALLY, IT DIDN'T SEEM SO GREAT. | 17 | P<br>T<br>AUIO<br>SD<br>W |
| Q | 4/08/80 | 505429 | S: SO THEN I WAS GOING TO DO WHEN DIANE COULD DO FOUR JUMPS ON THE POGO STICK AND I DID 400. AND, AGAIN, IT'S NOT SO INTERESTING. EVERYONE CAN P[illegible] STICK. THEN I GUESS I WAS GOING TO TRY THE GLASS SPACESHIP BUT I STOPPED AND I ONCE DID ONE ON FEEDING CHIPMUNKS AND IT IS IN MY FOLDER AND I MIGHT GET IT OUT AND ADD ON TO IT. I DON'T KNOW IF I LIKE THIS DRAFT TOO MUCH, BUT I'LL KEEP ON IT--KEEP BUILDING IT UP. | 17 | T<br>AUIO<br>P<br>IA<br>SD<br>W |
| Q | 4/08/80 | 505431 | S: BECAUSE I LIKE CHIPMUNKS AND IT IS NOT SOMETHING THAT HAPPENS EVERY DAY. | 17 | [P<br>T]<br>W |
| Q | 4/08/80 | 505432 | S: MAYBE. I CAN'T GET PLEASED WITH ONE THING. AND I MIGHT JUST KEEP WORKING ON THIS. MAYBE I'M WANTING TO BE TOO GOOD TOO SOON. THIS YEAR I LIKE THE SKUNK ONE BEST--IT WAS ALMOST LIKE IT WAS MEANT TO BE A STORY--THAT NIGHT I'D TALKED IT OVER WITH JILL--THIS ONE I MIGHT BE FORCING IT INTO A STORY. | 17 | SD<br>P<br>T<br>W |
| Q | 4/08/80 | 505436 | S: SOME OF THIS YOU MIGHT NOT UNDERSTAND--LIKE MY FATHER LIKING ME. I'LL JUST PUT IT IN--SORT OF LIKE A POEM--AND CHANGE IT. | 17 | AUCO<br>P<br>S<br>W |

## SOUND-GRAPHEME RELATIONSHIPS IN COMPOSING

The following two pages are samples of worksheets from video recordings of child language spoken during the writing process. The symbols in the left-hand column show the relationship of the audible language to the graphemes, or letters and letter combinations, that are placed on the page.

WL stands for the writing line. Graphemes are placed on this line as they occur in relation to the sound line, or SL, directly below. Thus, in Jennice's protocol, the "T" was placed on her page in the middle of saying "laughed". IPA, the bottom line, refers to the International Phonetic Alphabet translation of Jennice's sound line.

Sound-grapheme data gives a sense of the changing function of language and an approximate explaination for childrens' spelling inventions.

880 Jennice

WL +(°[illegible]mark)
(LL) SL No one laughed° any [no one laughed any more at
IPA no wan læft ɛni no wan læft ɛni mor æt

WL kø n ow w in e
SL Rudolph's nose] (oops) k n o w no one w one lau
IPA rudaf nəz (ps) ke ɛn o dablju no wan wə ənnn læft

WL l afe at R [flips back for sp
SL la-l-a-f at t Rudolph
IPA læ-ull-æ-f-f æt $t^h$ rudaf

WL od l-ph
1100 SL r-o-d-l-p-h No one laughed at Rudolph
IPA ar oo-di-ol-pi-eč no wən læft æt rudaf

WL ane mor
SL any any move [looks in desk] [Rereads]
IPA ɛni ɛ ni-ii mor

WL
SL no one more no one laughed at Rudolph any mov
1240 IPA no wan mə no wan lə-læft æt rudaf ɛnɪ mor.

Draws Rudolph

Key

[ ] extra considerations like pronounced exhalations, discourse phe

° words given special emphasis * indistinct sounds.

Underlining - words spelled rather than sounded.

Parentheses - mouthed or low whispers

↗ intonation contours where noticeable or unusual

- Turns page counts number of page left (3).

0 44. WL T h e n
SL uh the
IPA əə ði
NAP Turns page again

020 45. WL: We Mad
SL: we we made (m) ə made then we mad
IPA: hwi me ( ) e med ðɛn wi met
NAP

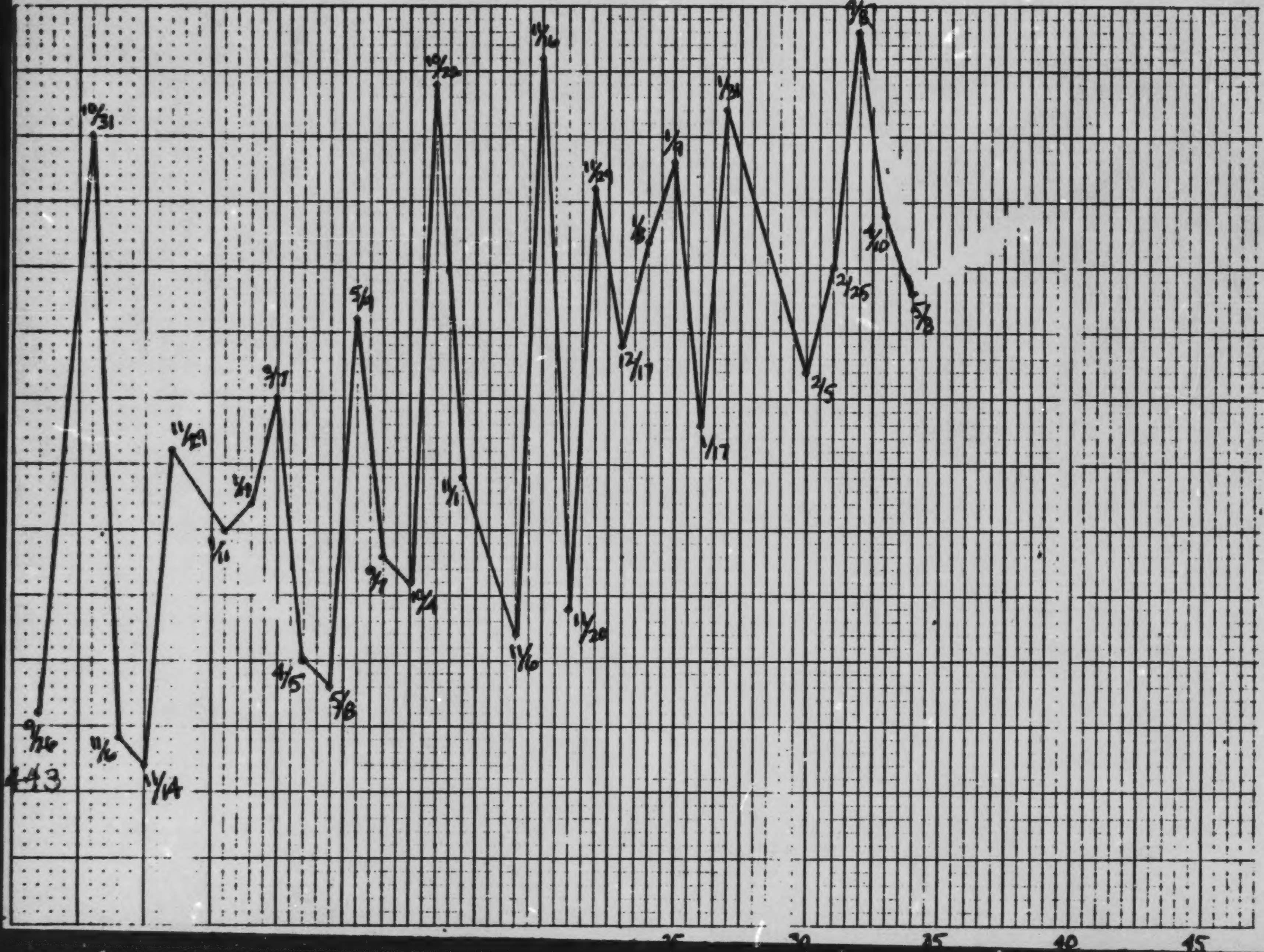
46. WL a
SL an then we made a (then we made a)[2] softer
IPA ən ɛn wi med e ɛn wɪ med ɛ
NAP

00 47. WL n u t h er
SL nother noth
IPA nəθ
NAP Erases uth

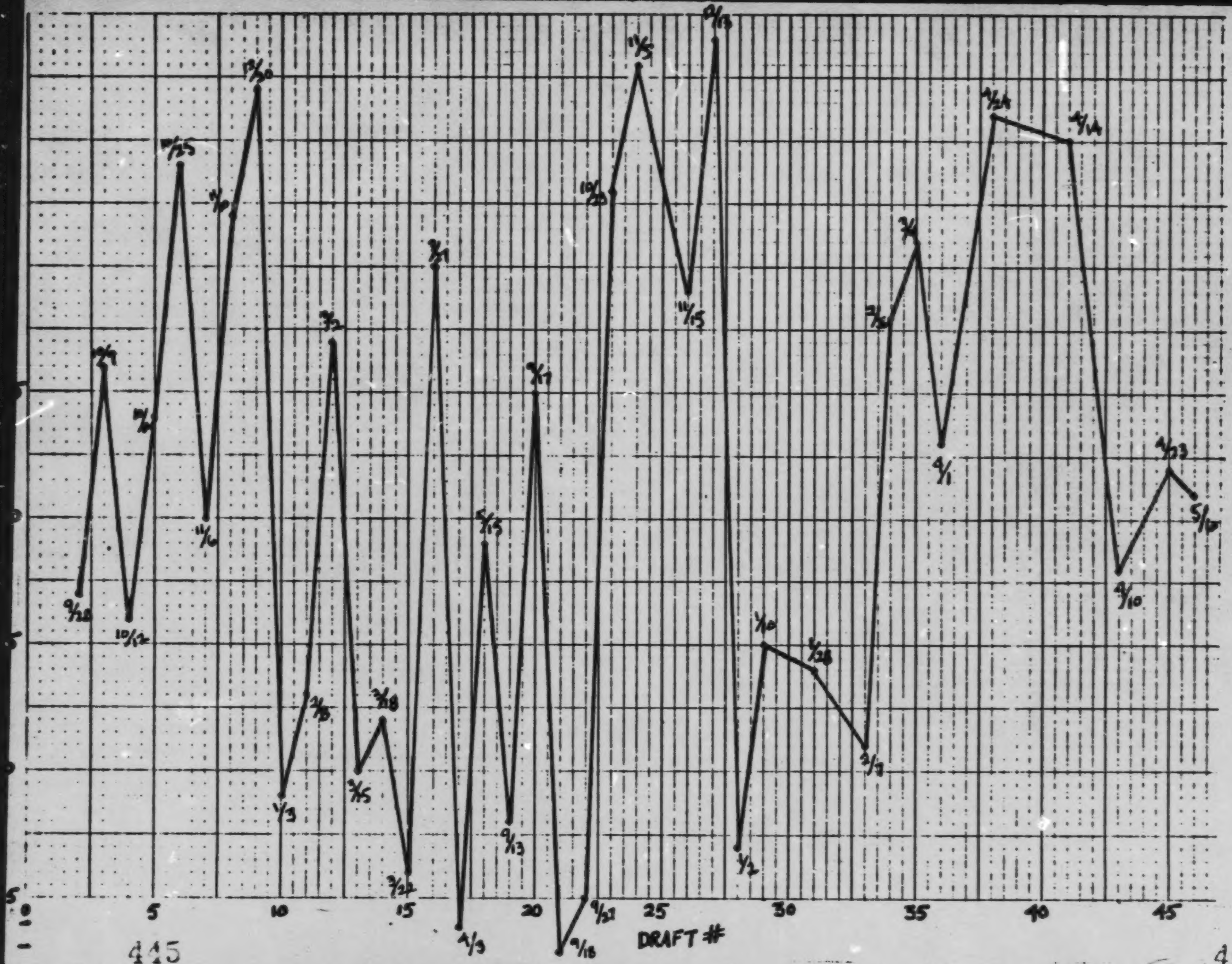
48. WL[1]
SL nother then we made another trail
IPA nəðɚ ðɛn wɪ med e nəðɚ trel
NAP

[1] - mouthed

[2] whispered to herself.



WRITER VARIABILITY - BIRGER



WRITER VARIABILITY - SUSIE

## EVALUATION SCALE

| High | Medium | Low |
|---|---|---|
| specifics that back up generalizations<br>examples<br>statistics<br>anecdotes | some specifics for support or lots of specifics - no unifying idea | flat, general statements<br>no supporting evidence |
| reasons for<br>effects of<br>explanations for | some logical connections | cause without effect or vice versa<br>2nd half of logical connection missing |
| complete series of events | relatively unimportant gaps | important gaps in sequences |
| selection of information for focus or emphasis | all information gives equal weight | |
| detailed description | some description | no description |
| feelings with explanations | some explained feelings | unexplained feelings<br>detail that appears to be a result of free association |
| | **ORGANIZATION** | |
| Objective paper's broken into logical categories<br>thesis statement followed by supporting evidence<br>narrative told in chronological order unless the meaning requires something different<br>effects follow causes, reasons and explanations follow statements | paper follows logical or appropriate sequence with occasional slips | statements seem to be made at random - - as they occur to writer |
| | **LANGUAGE** | |
| Use of similes, metaphors, analogies,<br>sentence length varied for emphasis<br>words repeated for emphasis<br>rhyme | Occasional figure of speech | no figures of speech |
| Both simple and complex sentences are used | Occasional complex sentences | all simple sentences |
| Observation of conventions | Decent mechanics | poor mechanics<br>unclear syntax |

# OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

-1-

**Name:** Jen **Date:** 12/14/79

## Woody's Night

**WORDS WRITTEN BY CHILD**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| But | her | Bed/ | | was |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| gone. | She | was | mad | at |
| 6 | 7 | .8 | 9 | 10 |
| her | Bed. | | | |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| She | had | a | new | Bed |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| it | was | Just | gone. | |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| She | fond | it | finnly. | It |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| was | good. | BecaS | | she |
| 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 |
| just got<br>~~-saw--~~<br>~~-fond-~~ | it. | | | |
| 36<br>39<br>54-55 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 |
| | that | mens | good | LUKC. |
| 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | 45 |
| | and | that | Bed. | See → |
| 46 | 47 | 48 | 49 | 50 |
| H | new | Bed. | Just | got |
| 51 | 52 | 56 53 | 54 | 55 |
| | | | Part | Tow |
| 56 | 57 | 58 | 59 | 60 |

**OBSERVER COMMENT COLUMN**

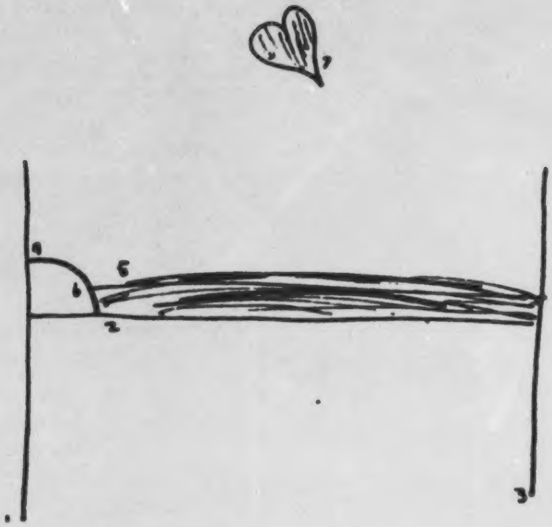
Jen changes p. 2 erasing:

But ~~-his-~~ ~~-her-~~

Bed was gone.

1 V: But
4 RR: But her bed...how can I put a period? (erases period.)
13 RR: 1-12.
14 Labels pictures:
Old BedRoom
New BedRoom
J: I got it.
15 J: She had a new bed.
21 V: it
22 V: was
23 V: just
25 J: I want this published. Ready? (Turns to page 3)
J: She found it. She found it finally.
26 V: she
27 V: found
28 V: it
29 V: finally
30 V: it
31 V: was
34 RR: Because she...she found it finally. It was good.
38 RR: 26-37 - Because she saw it already.
39 Changes 36 'found' to 'saw'.
40 Draws.
41 J: Wanna hear Woody's book?
Jen reads. She adds to p. 1, 'That means good luck.'
46 Jen rr p. 1 with addition, then p. 2.
R: Which bed - it was just gone?
J: The old one. Jen rr p. 2.
50 Arrow points to tiny drawing of bed in the text.
53 RR: p. 3.
54-55 Replaces 'saw, 36, with 'just got'.
56 RR p. 2 and adds to it.
57 Draws on back of p. 2, another bed.
58 P. 4
R: What are you going to write next, Jen?
J: Part 2.

**NAME:** Jen **DATE:** 12/14/79



57

5 Jen uses pink, orange, green and more pink, blue.

6 More colors over each other until it becomes black.

7 Jen dumps markers on the table.
J: Here's a pretty color (blue). Guess what color I'm going to add?

**Name:** Jen **Page 3** **Date:** 12/14/79

**WORDS WRITTEN BY CHILD**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | That | night | Woody |
| 61 | 62 | 63 | 64 | 65 |
| sow | something. | it | was | very |
| 66 | 67 | 68 | 69 | 70 |
| hard | to | see | | Becas |
| 71 | 72 | 73 | 74 | 75 |
| it | movd | aloTe. | | |
| 76 | 77 | 78 | 79 | 80 |
| 81 | 82 | 83 | 84 | 85 |
| 86 | 87 | 88 | 89 | 90 |
| 91 | 92 | 93 | 94 | 95 |
| 96 | 97 | 98 | 99 | 100 |
| 101 | 102 | 103 | 104 | 105 |
| 106 | 107 | 108 | 109 | 110 |
| 111 | 112 | 113 | 114 | 115 |
| 116 | 117 | 118 | 119 | 120 |

**OBSERVER COMMENT COLUMN**

61 Jen decorates Part 2 page.
62 J: Think I better do it on both sides. On this part there's not going to be pictures.
Jen rereads Woodsy, About the Author.
J: I love working on "Woody's Night, Part 1."
R: What will you write in Part 2?
J: I'm going to write small.
74 RR: 63-73.
J: Because it moved.
79 J: Now what will I write? Wanna hear it so far?
(Jen rr from beginning. Time for recess.)
R: What will happen?
J: It's gonna get her and bite her, but she's going to get away.
R: What's it?
J: The monster, of course.

---

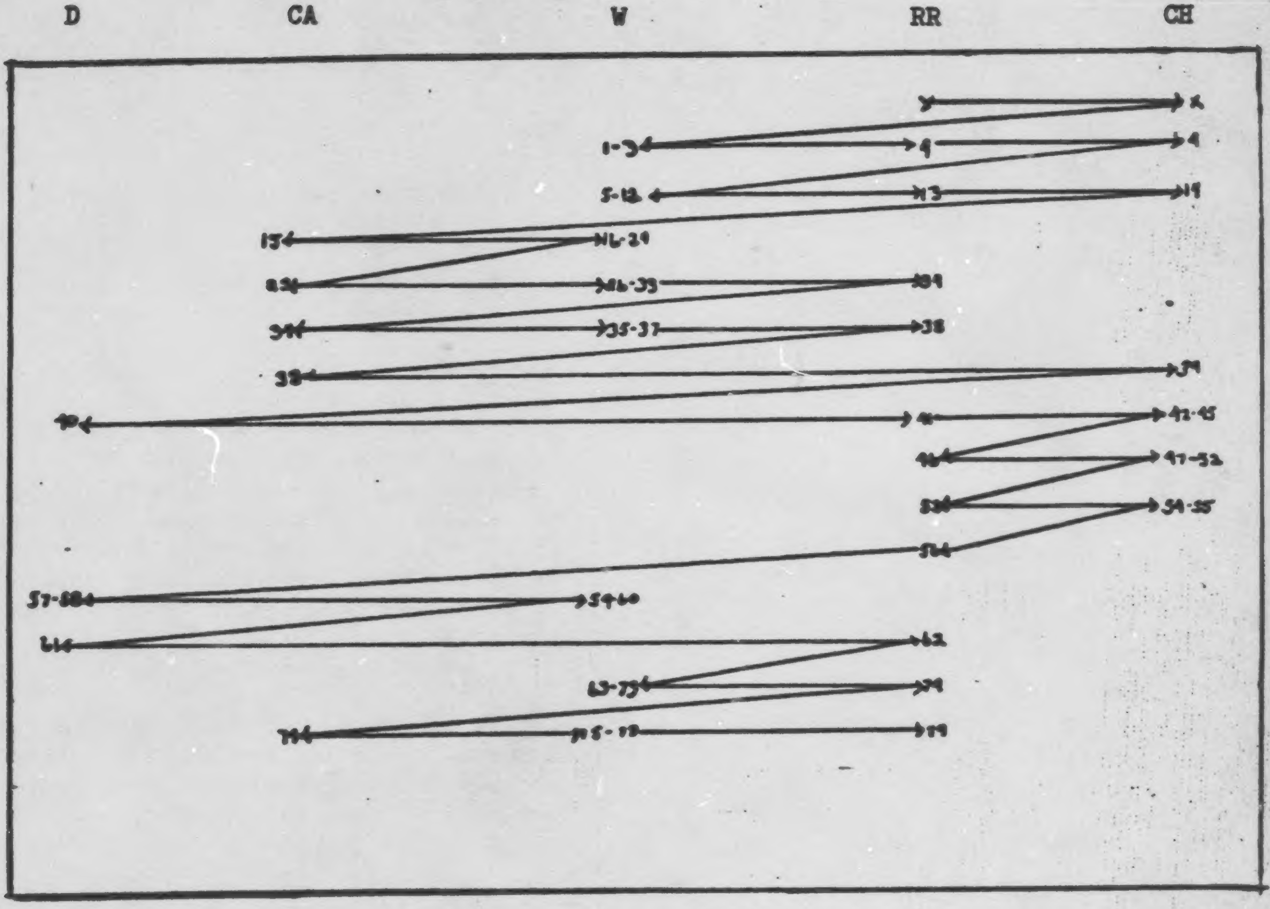
SUMMARY: Jen can write and make corrections and changes very quickly. She has just learned another way to speed up the process: write smaller. We are likely to see more confusing nonsense stories as well as more improvements. The scene is often at night in bed with a comfort vs. fear theme. It will be interesting to see if Jen follows up on Woody biting the monster.

Following are two diagrams showing the sequence of Jen's operations. Notice she never wrote more than eleven words together without interrupting herself.

## OBSERVATION CLASSIFICATION

## PROTOCOL

JENNIFER - DECEMBER 14


D
CA
W
RR
CH
2
1-3
4
5-12
13
14
15
16-24
26-33
34
35-37
38
39
40
41
42-45
46
47-52
53
54-55
56
57-58
59-60
61
62
63-73
74
79

KEY

D - DRAWING
CA - COMPOSING ALOUD
W - WRITING
RR - WRITING AND DRAWING
CH - CHANGING

## CLASSIFICATION OF REVISIONS

Name Susie Sible    Date 11/27/78 - 12/ /78 No.    Title The Big Fish

### Topics

1.
2.
3. The$_{16}$ myste$_{4}$rious Screech owl**$_{12}$
5. The$_{10}$ swurrels nest
6. How$_{10}$ I get the birds nest down
7. The VERY$_{11}$ big fish
8.
9. The$_{16}$ big snake
14.
15.
17.

### Notes on Topics

1. Mrs. Howard reviews list of Do's and Don'ts for Choosing a Topic.

2. Susie is to list five topics.

3. Writes first topic.

4. Asks how to spell.

5. Writes next topic.

6. Writes next topic.

7. Writes next topic.

9. Long pause.

10. Goes back, rr all. Crosses out second, third, fourth.

11. Erases crossed outness by Big Fish. "I like that one."

12. Adds X to first topic.

13. Crosses out second and third. "I don't want these. It is between the owl and the fish and the snake."

14. "I'm trying to decide which is most interesting."

15. Asks friend which is most interesting. No response. Susie doesn't mind.

16. Eliminates all but The Big Fish.

17. "It is one of the most interesting and I didn't pick the owl because it was very dark and we couldn't tell if it was an owl or a squirrel's nest and after school I have to go and see and if it is a squirrel it might be dull. If it is an owl, maybe my next piece of writing will be on it.

Name Susie Sible

Date 11/27/78 - 12/ /78

No.

Title The Big Fish

## Leads

1. I threw my line right into the weeds and all of a sudden I felted a big yank on my pole.

2. Help! I've got a big one dad! What do I do? When he feels lose let in line do it nice and easy!

3. Hurry I don't want it to get away its my first real big one and its togging very hard!

4. Me and my father were by some weeds in a boat fishing. It was a warm day out and the watar was very calm. When all of a sudden I felt something big, tug on my line!

5. Our boat was drifting on the water It was a beutiful warm day The sun was just going down behind some hills - ~~and all was peaceful~~. Just then I felt something on my line I thought it was a snag but it wasn't.

## Notes after Leads

1. Susie reads her leads to Diane because Mrs. Howard has suggested they share them.

2. S: "I think I'll do the last one." Diane agrees.

3. Diane asks "What did it feel like on the line?"

Susie says it was a strong pull, as if someone were trying to pull the line out of her hands.

Name Susie Sible
Date
No.
Title The Big Fish

## Lead 5, Draft #1

Our boat was drifting on the water it was a beautiful warm day The sun was just going down behind some hills. ~~And all was peaceful~~ Just then I felt something on my line. I thought it was a snag but it wasn't.

## Notes on Lead 5, Draft #1 & 2

1. Susie has written her fifth lead and is revising it. She writes draft two of it quickly without looking back.

3. Changes 'pole' to 'it'.

7. Crosses out.

6. Crosses out, "I don't need this."

2. RR

4. Asks if she should do another draft or write a story now. I tell her to read it over and decide.

5. Four minute pause.

8. She points out a problem to me. No one knows she is fishing. How can she put that in? "We were fishing and our boat was drifting?" she asks. I suggest she tell me what she saw as she fished. She describes jumping fish in the weeds.

9. Susie decides to try another draft starting with the jumping fish.

## Lead 5, Draft #2

Our boat was drifting on the water It was a beautiful warm day. The sun was just going down behind some hill. Just then on my pole It felt like someone was trying to take the ~~pole~~ 3 (it) from me. ~~I thought~~ 7 ~~it was a snag but it wasn't~~.6 ~~because it wriggles.~~ 2,4,5,8,9

**Summary:**

1) Susie seems to often revise working up the page, last line first. It is common for her to cross out the end of a sentence first, then to cross out the beginning of it.
2) Susie motivates her own revision. She doesn't need any intervention to step aside, and view her writing with the critical eye of a reader ( no. 8)
3) It is often helpful for Susie to tell the researcher about the event she is describing before she writes it (prewr.)

Name Susie Sible Date No. Title The Big Fish

## Lead 5, Draft #3

[10] Me and my father were fishing at a lake. [16] ~~it was beautiful~~. I looked in the water and saw [11] ~~something that looked~~ A quick flash. [17] ~~I looked closer and It was a~~ [18] ~~hole~~ School of fish that looked like silver dollars. Then a saw a few long things and they looked like grass [19] ~~but really~~ They were little fish. I was so busy looking at them I was very scared when [14] there was a quick jerk at my pole.

12.

13.

15.

20.

21.

## Lead 5, Drafts #3 & 4

10. 9/27

16. As she rereads piece, she says, "I don't need this."

11. Crosses out in process. Revises so it is more exact.

17. Scratches out.

18. Scratches out.

19. Scratches out.

14. Erases a squished-up word and writes it more neatly.

12. Finishes piece. 15 4/5 wpm

13. RR

15. Reads it again outloud to R.

20. Reads it outloud to friends.

21. Greg wonders if the title is good, "Is it about a big fish? Or a swarm of fish?" She tells him the 'big fish' part will come later.

## Lead 5, Draft #4

Me and my father were fighing at a lake. I looked in the water and saw a quick flash. It was a school of fish that looked like silver dollers. Then I saw a few long things and they looked like grass. They were little fish. I was so busy looking at them I was scared when there was a quick jerk at my pole.

Name Susie Date No. Title The Big Fish

24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35

Notes on First Draft

15. Finishes. Quickly Rereads start to finish.

16. Puts paper down, pulls back in chair, rubs chin.

17. Scratches out then in 4th sentence.

18. Scratches out in 6th sentence.

19. Pencil in hand, continues to reread.

20. Scratches out 'but'.

21. Adds 'and'. "It doesn't make sense the other way."

22. Adds word.

23. Scratches out.

24. "Should I try to circle my spelling mistakes?"

25. I ask if that's what she thinks she should do. "Yes." she says.

26. I suggest she try to correct them.

27. Peices changed to 'pieces'.

28. Rellchanged to 'reel'. Tries it out several times on scratch paper and asks me which is right.

29. Asks if thought is right.

30. Asks if easyer is right. I show her "I to Y" rule.

Name Susie
Date
No.
Title The Big Fish

## Notes on First Draft

31. Circles 'enogh'. Tries it on scrap paper. Gets it right. Erases wrong word and puts it in.

32. Asks if 'plop' is right.

33. Circles 'explored' and writes it correctly on scrap paper. Checks with R.

34. Asks if 'least' is right.

35. Susie's Comments: - "It's pretty good," she tells Researcher when she asks. "It has lots of action. I like the beginning when I show the fish. I like when it goes plop. I don't know if the ending is too, too, good or not. It may be boring."

Rerearcher reads it and agrees that the ending could be shorter or cut out.

**Note:**

1. **When Susie finishes a piece, she often reads it quickly from start to finish before picking up her pencil and examining it word for word.**
2. **Susie likes the ritual of circling her spelling words. Although this is only the first in a series of revsions, Susie revises first by scratching parts out, changing a word or two, and immediately after that circles spelling mistakes.**

Name Susie Sible Date No. Title The Big Fish

Interview - Summary:

R: "What do you think of it?"

S: "It is good. It tells a lot about one thing. It tells the exciting parts.

R: "Did you do anything new here?"

S: "Yes, I worked on a little section for a long, long time until I got it right. This is the only time I really worked on it hard. I wanted it to be perfect and it wasn't."

R: "What were you doing when you worked with the section?"

S: "I was thinking of what really happened and what would fit with the real thing and look-- good on paper."

R: "Did you have any problems with this?"

S: "Yes, trying to put all the stuff that happened into the paper. I could write a big, big book on it and I wanted to just put a tiny bit. ...trying to decide what little part to put down! I caught a bunch of little fish that I didn't tell about

16

**Name** Susie Sible **Date** **No.** **Title** The Big Fish

.....trying to decide what little part to put down. I caught a bunch of little fish that I didn't tell about. But everyone catches little fish once in a while.

R: "What are you going to do now?"

S: "With a ruler I'm going to make the sides even and push in the paragraphs a little and make it in my best writing."

R: "Who will see it?"

S: "I don't know. I think it's all finished, but it may not be."

Note: Increasingly, sections of Susie's revision work are becoming internal. In #8, for example, she considered this sentence and discarded it without writing anything down. All I saw or heard was a whispered "no". I questioned her - and out it came that she'd considered a line and rejected it because it was too long.

It is significant to note that these internal steps happen only after the physical lay-out is made for revision. Susie gets out her scrap paper where she will try various ways of writing this section.

1C

Name Susie Sible
Date
No.
Title The Big Fish

She writes 1, 2, 3 and she writes the first consideration and scratches it out. Only now does she do #2 in her mind. This same thing happened in the revision of lead #5.

It is also significant to note that on this draft Susie has begun to work-over many sections of her piece. She used to do many drafts of her leads, but not of middle parts of the paper.

Manchester Union Leader
12/17/78

# How Kids Learn To Write

y HELEN WOODLOCK
day News Correspondent

TKINSON, Dec 17 — The
t-grade children at
kwell School were seated
fortably on the floor,
ning intently to Amy
ard who was sharing a
y she had written about a
ny. There was no fidgeting
hispering, only quiet in-
ement.

sponding to questions
teacher Mary Ellen
obbe about the spelling of
ny," one child said he
d a "h," another heard an
at the end, while another
there was an "n" in the
le and finally one child
ed the entire word.

s was a sharing time in
f five classrooms at the
nson Academy and
well School involving 16
en in a program funded
he National Institute of
ation to find out how
ren write creatively.

team of three is headed
y Dr. Donald Graves of
University of New
pshire with two full-time
rch associates, Susan
rs and Lucy Calkins who
riters as well.

Graves, who had done a cross-country study for the Ford Foundation looking at the status of writing, was concerned about finding a place where writing is going on. "It's going on here in Atkinson."

"We need to know the barriers the children encounter in the area of ideas for instance. When I'm driving home I'm rehearsing and planning what I'm going to write when I get there but young children don't have that knack yet."

Third-grade teacher Pat Howard explained that she had her children list things from personal experience and then they selected a subject they're comfortable with. As suggested by Dr. Graves, the child is asked to draw a picture to describe their subject before writing.

The language of writers, such as leads, drafts and revisions, are commonplace among the children and, after sharing their story with their classmates, revise and draft and re-draft until it's in its final form.

The story is then published in a hard-covered book as Dr. Graves believes it is just as important for a six-year-old to publish as it is for a professor, "because when the audience reads it, you take on a new status and you say my words count and I have an effect on other people."

When asked how these six and eight-year-olds coped with spelling and punctuation, Mrs. Robbins explained that children don't necessarily have to know how to spell many words to write, all they really have to know is a few sounds. "If they get hung up on how to spell every word, they lose their thought process."

## NEED AUDIENCE

This is where the audience takes on an important role in the program. Rather than the teacher, the youngsters of the audience comment on the story and make suggestions sometimes saying that the story doesn't make sense or they "don't get it." The student then goes back to work and re drafts his story.

Children need audiences, says Dr. Graves, "they've never had an audience for their writing only "To Whom it May Concern" -- the teacher. Writers are always asking another person's opinion, he said, for improvement or clarity.

From his studies so far, Dr. Graves has found that when children get the chance to write, they'll write far more than we could ever assign and "it shocks me every time."

"The third graders are now doing four to five drafts and the first graders who have published 18 or 19 hard-covered books of their own are getting giddy with success."

"The other thing I can't get used to yet is the extraordinary reading ability of these children who are writing. I come from the field of reading and although I thought it could help, I didn't dream what the writing does for reading."

Mrs. Robbins said that vocabulary has also increased beyond expectations. "If we take the series of books written by one child, maybe a dozen have been published, she's used about 350 words and that's a conservative estimate."

"Normally at this time of the year, she might have mastered 75-100 words.

Dr. Graves and his two associates publish everything they discover and encounter in working with the children, on a regular basis in national journals and magazines.

# Atkinson students teach UNH professors

By TED C. RANDALL

ATKINSON — The tables were ned this fall at Atkinson Academy en professors from the University New Hampshire started taking es from 15 youngsters in the first third grades. "Gee, these people n the university are learning how draw!" exclaimed one incredulous dent.

Drawing is just one of the lessons ng given the professors during a year study devoted to discovering e people learn how to write. "What ter place to begin than in the first ade?" asks University of New mpshire associate professor of cation Donald Graves, director of study.

There is no question that the first de and Atkinson Academy are good places to start with writing," Professor Graves added. He and two associates will be attending grades one and three this year and grades two and four next year. For the professors, it's back to school. For the students, it's fun to be the teacher.

The youngsters in Ellen Giacobbe's first grade class have borrowed a traditional symbol of the professors' trade. They are publishing their own books — books which they have written and illustrated. Should the professors need any, the young authors give tips as each step in the process is observed.

"We have discovered that writing is very much related to reading," says Professor Graves. "Writing should come first," he added noting that he has even heard from parents that children take a break from television to read at home.

"They need a topic," Professor Graves said. "Reading gives them a place to start," he added.

"We used to think that spelling was a matter of giving the correct form. Spelling occurs in three stages of invention over the course of three to six months," the professor noted. The breakthrough is writing seems to come when children see words as "clay" and know that they can be revised and corrected. The best works come in a series of drafts, notes the writing expert. We see real progress when children understand how the final copy evolves.

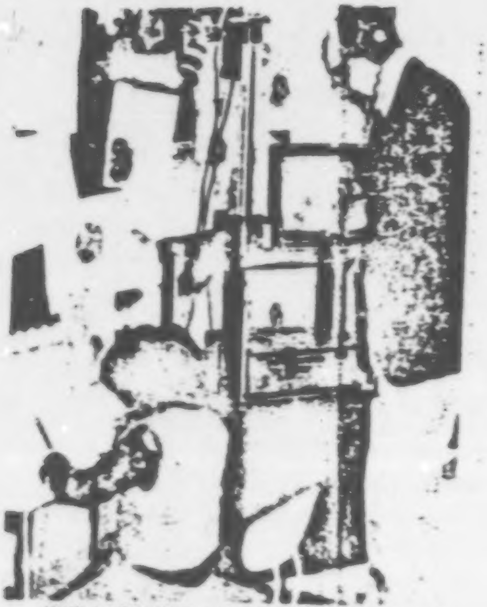
Another point the professor makes is that encouraging writing takes a huge investment in time. "You cannot get them started in just a few minutes each day," says Professor Graves. After the initial investment, they become self-starters. Despite televison, the initiative is still there among youngsters to seek out reading and writing assignments, he added. "In writing you start from scratch. You make the banquet and eat it too," says Professor Graves who likens the television product to a ready-to-eat promotion.

Professor Graves stresses the importance of having students write about what they know. Later they can work to build up their range of knowledge and experience. The professor also notes the importance of encouraging speed. "It is easier to get to second and third drafts when the first comes quickly," he says.

"Everyone can be taught to discover their own experiences through writing," Professor Graves says. He is a teacher of adults as well as children. "I never would have believed it could have been done this early," he added. "But I see no reason why it cannot be done at this stage," he said.

So for Professor Graves and his two assistants who are daily visitors to Atkinson Academy, it's back to the first grade where the teachers are the students and the professor does all the homework!

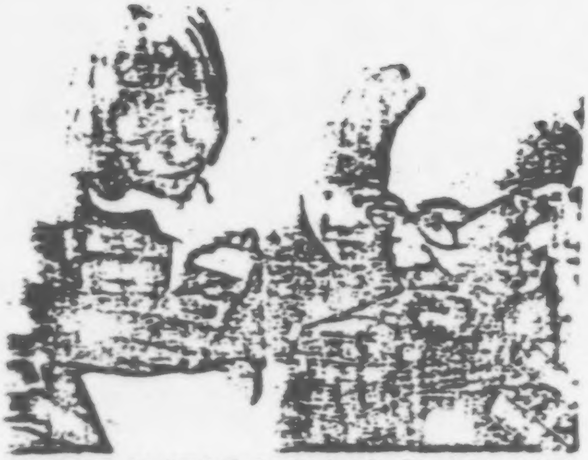
IRST GRADE teacher Mary Ellen Giacobbe of Atkinson Academy isplays the before and after of writing projects [illegible] sts. Each of he students takes a hand at putting together his own book as part of the egular assignment in Mrs. Giacobbe's class.



**HOW A STUDENT** writes is recorded in this equipment being operated by Prof. Donald Graves. Graves is recording student Charles LaRose as she works.

**CONFERENCES** on writing are held between teacher and pupil to make changes in the first draft of the writing. Discussing her paper with teacher Mary Ellen Giacobbe is Darlene Marin.

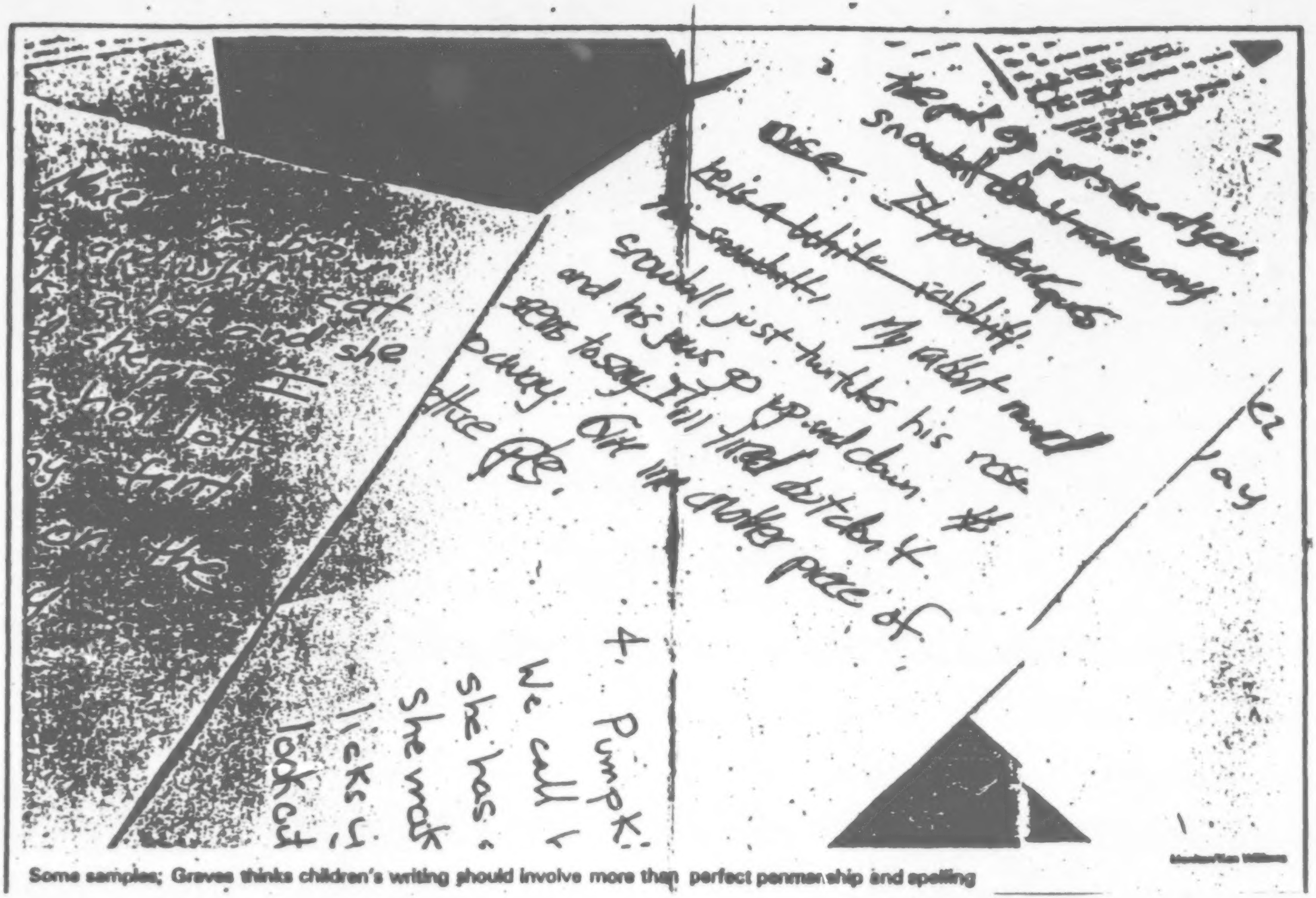
(Photos by Patty Bournival)



**DR. DONALD GRAVES** learns how third graders learn how to write at Atkinson Academy. Dr. Graves will be learning about learning at the Atkinson school over a two year period.

**SCOTT BLACKADAR**, a first grader at Atkinson Academy, takes real interest in his writing assignment. Scott and other members of his class are, after all, published authors.

**BINDING THE BEST** — About one of every four writings gets "published" and is available for other students in the school to read. Sewing an illustrated book together is volunteer mother Barbara Haynes. looking on are students Lindsey Matson and Sena Stewart, right.


3.
snowball just twitches his nose
and his ears go up and down.
piece of
4. Pumpk
We call
she has
She mak
licks
look at
2
1

Some samples; Graves thinks children's writing should involve more than perfect penmanship and spelling

CONCORD MONITOR, Saturday, April 14, 1979

# Children's Writing: A Need To Say 'I Am'

Donald Graves of UNH

By LILA LOCKSLEY
Monitor Staff Writer

Chris wrote a story about dinosaurs and illustrated each page. On one page, he wrote that dinosaurs travel in groups.

When his teacher asked him why dinosaurs do that, Chris answered, "To protect the young."

"Chris, that should be in your story," the teacher said.

Looking over the page with the paragraph carefully printed below the picture, Chris protested: "But I don't have any more room on the page."

"Put your finger on some white space," the teacher said.

Reluctantly, Chris found an empty corner of sky. He wrote the sentence in the empty space.

"Now draw an arrow from the paragraph to that sentence," the teacher said.

Chris drew an arrow less than half an inch high.

"Draw an arrow up to the sentence," the teacher said.

Chris slowly drew an arrow through his picture and up to the sentence.

"Congratulations," the teacher said. "You just did what professional writers do."

□□□

Donald H. Graves, a professor of education at the University of New Hampshire, believes good writing habits build from crossed-out words and rearranged paragraphs.

Yet most children in the first grade are taught to think writing involves perfectly formed letters and flawless spelling.

Revision is the key to good writing, Graves says, but children think "only dummies have to do it twice." And young children like Chris hate to mar their work with arrows and erasures, he says.

Graves, the director of the UNH Writing Process Laboratory, is an expert on how children learn to write. He thinks many teachers and parents have been teaching reading and writing backwards.

"It's long been thought that you can't learn to write until you learn to read," he said. "That's garbage. hildren are more interested in their wn writing than in the writing of others."

He contends children closely relate reading and writing. If you ask 5-year-olds whether they can read or write, he says, only about 20 percent will say they can read while 95 percent will say they can write.

He thinks first grade is a good time to begin writing stories because "children at this age are fearless. They're sure they're right all the time. The white page is not forbidding."

But he says parents and teachers "very much underestimate what children can do. Their potential is enormous."

Their fearlessness, coupled with the egotism of their age, makes them receptive students, he says. And like adults, children "hunger for something visible, for something that says, 'I am.' "

With a two-year grant from the National Institute of Education, Graves is working with the first and third

(See WRITING — Page 10)

[illegible]/Ken Williams

Graves gestures as he talks about children's writing

# WRITING

(Continued From Page 1)

grade pupils in a school in Atkinson. He sits near them and closely observes as they think through a topic, write and revise.

At the school teachers require children to write three different opening paragraphs, or leads, for each of their stories. In the process, the pupils begin to learn for themselves how to narrow the focus and make the subject more immediate.

He gave an example of one student, who wrote the following leads:

☐ "Once when I was very little I got a hank to fly, so I tried jumping off things and tried to float up and across."

☐ "I always wanted to fly, but whenever I tried it, I always fell Kaboom on the ground."

☐ "Kaboom! That hurt! Why can't I fly? The birds do. Even with these wings, nothing happened."

Graves also stresses that pupils should choose their subjects and meet in conferences with peers and the teacher.

He says many teachers give a class a single topic even though "you write better when you know what you're talking about."

Children write best about personal experiences because they have the most information about their lives, he says.

"If a teacher wants a child to write about how it feels to be an ice cream cone or a cucumber, it's impossible because nobody knows."

Graves has also found that children tend to write with little organization.

"They write with their feelings. They add lines like 'I love him, I kiss her, I feel good,' like salt into a stew."

It is the teacher's job, Graves says, to ask questions that will draw out more information. If a child starts asking more questions of himself, his writing will become more vivid.

But because a child needs help focusing his ideas, Graves says, a teacher should work with students in small groups and conferences. Although many teachers shy away from writing with their pupils because the act of writing is revealing, he says teachers have to do it.

"The teacher must be willing to be a persona nudist and undress in public. (Otherwise) in the classroom there is one fully dressed person staring at everyone else. Teachers have got to take off their clothes and write with them.

"It's unheard of for a piano teacher not to play with his students."

Graves contends few teachers know how to write or like it much.

At the Atkinson School the first graders rewrite paragraphs and write several drafts of their stories. The final draft, with proper spelling, penmanship and illustrations, is made into a book.

The teacher does the labor, making cardboard bindings covered with wallpaper and sewing the pages together with dental floss.

The class now has about 500 books. They vary from six to eight pages and from 15 to 75 words. Graves says this allows children to learn to read from their own books.

"We forget too often that writing is the beginning of reading. When you're a writer, you read more than when you aren't. We don't capitalize on their self-interest enough."

Graves thinks informational conferences for teachers bring good results. At the beginning of the year, when he asked students what made a story good, the answer would invariably be, "If it's long."

A story might be bad if "it's terribly messy."

Now the children understand that writing can be messy in the first draft. Some now judge a story by whether it is informative. Those who are most highly developed have a sense of future: They realize the first draft is not final and may be revised again and again.

Unlike older children, 5 and 6-year-olds are daring enough to risk writing sentences like "A cheetah would make a sports car look like a turtle."

Says Graves: "It's like learning to walk. When you're 6, you don't have as far to fall."

NEW HAMPSHIRE SUNDAY NEWS, Manchester (N.H.) — Sunday, January 13, 19[illegible]

# Two-Year Study Focuses On How Children Write

**By PATTY BOURNIVAL**
**Sunday News Correspondent**

ATKINSON, Jan. 12 — "If kids played tball once a year, they would hate it: d that's how it is with writing. The rea- n kids don't like it is because they do it seldom," says Prof. Donald Graves. ho is conducting a federally-funded dy at Atkinson Academy.

The University of New Hampshire pro- ssor received a $230,000 grant last year om the National Institute of Education conduct a three-year research project how children write.

After a six-month search, Graves decid- Atkinson Academy was the school for s research. "I picked this one because 's a top school. It has a strong principal ean Robbins) and strong teachers," he id.

"With a strong principal, parents have nfidence in the principal and that is ecessary for someone like me to come to the school and conduct the study," he id.

Graves and two other researchers, Su- n Sowers and Lucy McCormick-Gal- ns, are observing the children on a daily asis for a two-year period. Graves is in e second year of his observing.

He will then spend another year putting gether the information he has gathered. he written study then will be available to achers throughout the United States d the world.

## WHAT'S THE PURPOSE

Graves explained the purpose of the tudy is to help teachers see how a child evelops his writing. He hopes that infor- nation will enable teachers to get a clear- r understanding of how to help young- ters to write

Writing was always strongly empha- ized at the school, but since Graves and is researchers arrived, students are riting better, learning more and enjoy- ng it.

Graves said the success of the program an be attributed to the extraordinary eaching staff

"You can't teach what you don't do," and e teachers here do write. There have een 14 articles published that have been ritten by the teachers," he said

"The students see their teachers write. hat's important. You wouldn't expect a udent to learn piano if he never saw his eacher play."

The study is attracting the attention of educators from many areas of the country as well as Canada and Australia. Teachers from all over have visited the school to observe the program.

The method of teaching writing at Atkinson Academy is one not used in many schools. Students learn from the first grade the initial attempt at writing a story, known as the first draft, is never the final copy, and changes should be made.

Graves explained the conventional method of assigning a student a topic, and then correcting the written paper is not as successful as the method being employed in Atkinson.

"Usually teachers deal with before-and-after when correcting mistakes, but it's too late then. Here, the teachers hold several conferences, on an individual level and in groups, to make changes in the piece before it's finalized," he explained.

"Kids get corrected when there's nothing they can do about it. Here, the teachers and their students point out ways they can better their stories."

He added selection of a topic by the teacher makes writing more difficult for the student. One of the most important things a student must learn about writing is to select his own topic and limit his writing to that topic without including extraneous information.

## KIDS WILL WRITE SOONER

He explained by using this method, children are writing far sooner than what was believed possible.

Graves said first graders are using quotation marks, periods and commas, in their writing.

"They don't know what they're called, but they know quotation marks make people talk and commas take the place of ands," he said

When he recently asked one first grader why he place a period at the end of a sentence ("... after sliding down the hill."), the little boy explained if the period wasn't there to stop the sentence, he'd go right through the house.

Students are encouraged to make several drafts of a story before submitting the final copy. After each draft, the student has a conference with his teacher and other students.

"Kids are preoccupied with being neat, but we teach them it is important to carve up a piece in draft form to make it a clear, final draft," he said.

## INTERVIEW EACH OTHER

Children are always looking for subjects to write about and the teachers emphasize the students should write about what they know. Youngsters can be found interviewing one another for a story.

During a recent visit by an Australian one youngster told the visitor he would ir terview him, but noted the visitor woul have to wait because "Fred" was first

Approximately one out of every fou pieces becomes "published." The storie are illustrated by the students then hand sewn into a cardboard cover. The pul lished editions are then available for st dents in the school to check out and read

Graves said one positive aspect of t program he hadn't expected was an ir provement in the reading skills of the st dents.

Last June, the third grade class score in the 99 percentile nationwide for bas skills and reading comprehension.

"It stunned us all. We were afraid th reading would be hurt because we' been spending so much time on writin but it had the reverse effect," Grave said.

"I am convinced after this data th more time spent on writing, the more th reading scores will improve," Grave said.

He concludes the data suggests stu dents learn to read by writing, rathe than to write by reading, as has been th past belief.

# Education

California's Bay Area teachers prepare writing lessons for grade school pupils

## The Righting of Writing

*From kindergarten on up, Americans are wrestling with the word*

The first time that Third-Grader Brian wrote a paper for his writing class in Atkinson, N.H., it began like this: "I have a problem with my ribs. If I get hurt on my left side I can't breathe." Prodded to think it out more carefully by his teacher, University of New Hampshire Education Professor Donald Graves, Brian realized he was trying to describe a past event, not a current pain. On his second attempt he wrote: "Once when I was in second grade. I was on a seesaw and fell ... I can't breathe!" Better, but Brian still had mixed up a past and a present tense. After another chat with Graves, he decided to carry his readers directly, and grammatically, back to the scene of his accident. This time he began his paper: "I couldn't talk! I was trying to say, 'I can't breathe!'"

Not fancy, perhaps, but each of Brian's successive drafts was clearer, better punctuated, more vivid and more conscious of his reader. These are the main goals of Graves, who, with a $240,000 grant from the National Institute of Education, teaches writing to elementary school pupils in a style more like that of a working editor than a stern grammarian. The experiment is part of a wave of writing reform that is sweeping through schools, colleges and businesses all over the U.S. In the age of talk shows, tape recorders, telephonitis and declining educational standards, the clearly written word is swiftly becoming a lost art. The many new courses attempting to correct that drift are concerned not with "creative" writing but with something almost as rare: clear, usable, everyday prose.

A notable step was taken in 1978, when Congress added writing to the list of topics eligible for Government grants. In the past year, requests for applications to get federal help for basic skills training soared from about 2,000 a year to 14,000. Last year the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) doled out $2.4 million for projects to improve writing, double the amount of the year before.

In Detroit, the high school system has introduced writing proficiency tests for graduates. All Detroit high school courses now require students to write at least two compositions a month. Ohio schools are offering Young Authors programs, including publication of student writing and conferences at which they can discuss their work. More than 200,000 students from grades 1 through 12 in 35 states are engaged in the Individualized Language Arts program, funded by the Government. I.L.A. students meet two or three times a week, write short paragraphs on the same assigned topic, read them aloud, discuss possible improvements and then revise, often at greater length. The Bay Area Writing Project has spread from Berkeley, Calif., to 74 communities around the country. Its aim is to teach writing teachers how to teach writing. All sorts of methods are used, including the rewriting for clarity of long sentences by William Faulkner.

The academic assault on bad writing is strongest, and most varied, in the nation's colleges. "The buck is finally stopping with us," says William N. Free, a vice president at the University of Toledo. This semester, with 43 other top-level college administrators, Free attended a two-day workshop sponsored by the University of Iowa's Institute on Writing.

In some ways Iowa is the nerve center of writing reform and the source of

---

## A Pox on "Medicant"

To many doctors, a headache is "[illegible]." Itching is "pruritus." Swallowing is "[illegible]." [illegible] tend to view such words as tools of the [illegible] precise speech. But Lois DeBakey, a professor of scientific communication at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, thinks that technical jargon not only alienates patients but masks fuzzy thinking.

In seminars and with a traveling lecture entitled "Please, Doctor, Watch Your Language," DeBakey (sister of Heart Surgeon Michael DeBakey) campaigns against "medicant," her term for the linguistic disease that afflicts physicians. Lois and her sister Selma, who is also on the Baylor faculty, [illegible]

The patient was explored.

[illegible] language by asking audiences to scan horrible examples from medical journals. A favorite: the article by a [illegible] administrator that urged medical staffs to "[illegible] approach to the community [illegible] of the interface between institutions of medicine [illegible] weight and gestation were [illegible] deaths with congenital heart disease that were autopsied." They use cartoons to illustrate medical clichés: "the patient was explored"; "two days after admission, the patient was operated."

Says DeBakey: "Until society restores literacy to a position of esteem, there is no motivation for young people to learn to read and write." Aptly enough, she advises doctors to heed the words of Alexander Pope: "Words are like leaves; and where they most abound/ Much fruit of sense is rarely found."

## Education

the renaissance of clear collegiate prose. For the second year in a row, Iowa is running a six-month course for directors of freshman English programs from colleges all over the country, among them Dartmouth, Hollins and the Air Force Academy. The professors not only study writing and how to teach it, they write papers and are constantly subjected to criticism. One assignment this year: build a homemade anemometer to measure wind, then write a clear and concise report about how it works.

Re-experiencing the pangs of composition can be a humbling experience. Taking criticism from others is painful but useful. Concedes Beverly Been, director of freshman composition at Washington's Walla Walla College: "In the past all I cared about was that students produced a paper that was grammatically correct. It may, in fact, have said nothing."

Another goal of the Iowa program is to combat what the institute calls the "battered writer syndrome," *i.e.*, student papers that are slashed with red pencil in the margins—*awk* for awkward phrase, *dangle* for dangling participles and modifiers—without any comments on substance. Says Iowa's David Hamilton: "Once you and the writer agree on what he is trying to say, then you can come to agreement about how to put it into form."

The Iowa institute is seeking commitment to curricular reform from a cross section of the nation's colleges. So far, 22 new freshman writing courses have resulted from the program. Beyond teaching techniques, the Iowa gospel is that writing instruction should not be confined to English departments. It must become a part of all college courses.

That approach, known as "writing across the curriculum," was first pioneered at Minnesota's Carleton College. It has been applied since 1977 by more than 60 faculty members at Beaver College, in Glenside, Pa. There, students practice writing in history, psychology (as they observe and describe the "Mama Rat" experiment in the lab), even mathematics classes, where they write word problems. So far, 400 schools and colleges have asked Beaver for details of the program. Observes Beaver Professor Elaine Maimon, 35: "In freshman composition, English teachers used to teach their favorite works of literature. We were not respecting the kinds of prose that our colleagues in other disciplines require of students."

In college English departments, the shift from an all-out study of literature to a more rigorous blend of literature and composition can be a shock to the faculty. At the University of Texas' Austin campus, half the students in the 1960s were excused from fulfilling the freshman English requirement. Today that group has dipped to 28%. To staff the 256 sections of freshman English now required at the sprawling state campus, Liberal Arts Dean Robert King has ordered all English pro-

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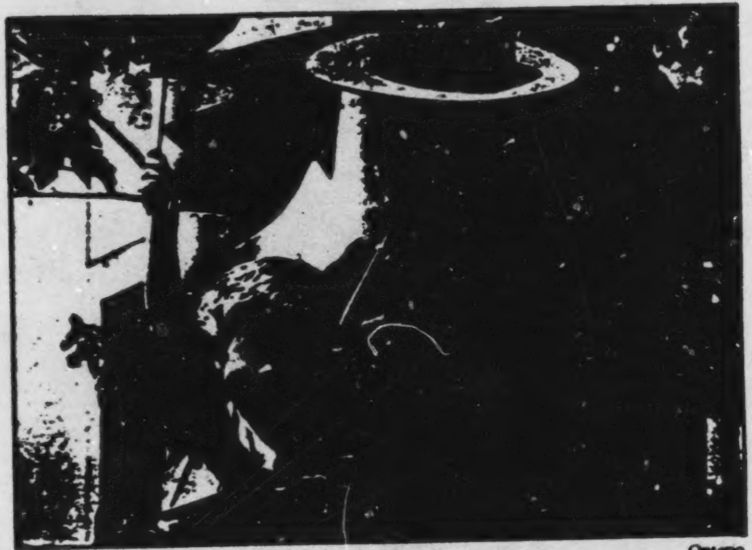
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## Education

fessors to teach one composition course annually. So far, none has carried out initial threats to quit from overwork.

Duke University has plans to require English composition for all freshmen regardless of entering grades or Scholastic Aptitude Test scores. But the battle does not end with the freshman year. Dartmouth recently discovered that the skill of some students who did well in freshman writing actually declined in the next three years, so lax were the college writing requirements.

One new technique for teaching writing is something called "sentence combining." Instead of analyzing essays or mastering general principles, students learn writing and organization by building paragraphs from collections of dozens of related sentences ("The train arrives at the station"; "The station is crowded"). One study of 300 freshmen at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, found that students trained by this method wrote significantly better than a control group. Sentence combining can be used at all age levels. A program called Success, developed at Duke, teaches second- and third-graders how to read and write using vocabulary from newspapers. Before writing their own paragraphs, they compose paragraphs together, with the teacher at the blackboard acting as secretary.

**The Iowa Institute's Richard Lloyd-Jones**

*Writing must be part of all college courses.*

In part because these and other writing reforms are so late in coming, businesses increasingly find it necessary to set up their own writing programs. It is not merely that secretaries tend not to know how to spell. M.B.A.s with degrees from prestigious colleges cannot write clear letters, memos or reports. "Communications training is one of the hottest areas in the corporate field today," says Nate Rosenblatt, a vice president of a new and thriving New Jersey-based company called Learn Inc. One of Learn's big pedagogic sellers—to personnel at RCA and E.F

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## Education

Hutton, among others—is a packaged seminar called Power Writing. Sample exercises: write a thank-you letter or a memo with a "dynamic" and "relevant" opening; write a rejection on a business proposal with sympathy and understanding. One corrective exercise asks. "Did you find rewriting the cliches easy?" At $89.95 each, the firm has sold upwards of 10,000 Power Writing kits, each of which contains workbooks, a dictionary, a thesaurus and four audio cassettes. American Telephone and Telegraph has budgeted an estimated $2 million to provide a customized version of the Power Writing course for 20 Bell System offices throughout the nation.

Behind the push by business to improve employee writing is a recognition that bad writing costs money. "We can't do anything with their engineering if they can't explain it to us," says an Amoco supervisor in Wyoming. "I don't have time to fiddle around with their ideas unless they've worked them into shape." As Gene Cartwright, a manager at Standard Oil of Indiana, puts it, "Companies are built around reports." Robert L. Craig, an official of the American Society for Training and Development, goes further. Poor writing, he insists, is a significant "factor in the whole drop in the growth of American productivity."

Like employees elsewhere, most of those who enroll at the Sun Institute for the Sun Co. course called Write Up the Ladder suffer from lack of confidence about writing basic memos and letters. "They hate to be straightforward or direct," says George Murphy, one of the Villanova University English professors who handle the course. Says Bonnie Perry, a Sun education director: "Their idea of what constitutes good writing is something that is excessively pompous and stilted. They go on and on, never getting to the point."

Few of the suggested ways to improve writing are truly new. What is new is the national conviction that something must be done about writing, and the challenge of trying to spread writing skills widely throughout a society as diverse as the U.S.'s. As Richard Lloyd-Jones, associate director of the Iowa institute, observes, "In the 12th century, you could have 50 to 100 scribes take care of all the business of the Court of Chancery in England. Only in the 20th century have we had the notion that everyone needs to be able to do it. Until now we have not really faced the problem of how to pass on writing by means other than one-to-one apprenticeship."

The fuss over writing skill means one thing at least: students will write more. And that fact alone is significant, whatever the quality of instruction and the classroom method. Writing experts frequently quote an apt Latin proverb *scribendo disces scribere*. It means that by writing one learns to write ■

The Sydney Morning Herald, Tues. Sept. 2, 1980

# Easing the pain of writing

Professor Graves: "When you write you undress."

WRITING is a painful process.

Professor Donald Graves had an audience of the Primary English Teaching Association in laughing agreement recently when he gave an account of his pangs of composition.

He said he would first prepare his desk and sharpen his pencils. He would then wait for any delaying telephone calls, and maybe make a few of his own. Procrastination began his task of writing.

He quoted Dorothy Parker: "I hate writing, but I love having written."

This is a common experience among professional writers. Professor Graves, a professor of education at New Hampshire University in the United States, used this as an example of the problems of teaching writing. He was making the point that there should be a daily writing effort, not just an occasional test essay.

"We all hate the unknown," he later told Education Herald. "But though practice may not make perfect, it makes writing familiar. You must remember that there is a lot of fear attached to having to look at a blank piece of paper and write."

He also condemned the habit of some teachers who set pupils

football, a day in the life of a flower, a fly, or some other such arcane matter.

"You can't write about what you don't know," he said. "Children must choose their own topics. And furthermore they need help in developing them. Most kids in schools don't know what they do actually know. It has to be coaxed out of them."

He referred to this aspect of writing as Turf, allowing pupils to work on familiar ground. Also he stressed the importance of teachers writing with the children. He made an analogy with the teaching of crafts. You don't expect a potter or painter to instruct without demonstrating to his class what he means.

professional and amateur writer is often the number of drafts made," he said. "The first efforts can be very similar."

Professor Graves, who will be 50 next week, was one of the stars of the English in the 80s conference.

But academia and education has been his fifth career.

He started in the military as a coastguard. He then became a teacher and rose to school head. Later he was ordained and spent five years working as a Presbyterian minister before moving into the field of family and marriage counselling.

In the sixties he worked in an

became the director of the Reading English as a Second Language and Bilingual Program in the city of Lackawanna, adjacent to Buffalo, New York. Like Wollongong, Lackawanna attracted a large number of migrants to its huge steel plant. The city contained 12 different languages and 55 ethnic groups.

He took his doctorate in language arts in Buffalo. In 1977 he became associate professor and this year full professor of education at New Hampshire University.

Professor Graves said too often writing was used as a punishment in schools — take 100 lines or write an essay on

"Teachers know there is pain attached to it," he said. "Writing is painful, ergo you get it."

He added that when we write we are like professional nudists.

"When you write you undress," he said. "And this is another reason why a teacher should join in the writing program, as there is "nothing worse than someone walking around with clothes on in a nudist camp."

Professor Graves, who is director of the Writing Process Laboratory at New Hampshire University, has students from three years of age to professional writers. He requires them to publish their work in hard-covered books, sewing their pages and illustrations together to be shared among their fellow authors. The youngest children have eight to 10 pages, the nine-year-olds five to six typed pages.

Authors can then check each other's work, including the writing produced by Professor Graves. The classroom becomes like a studio, for when we write, he said, we are in a craft area. The group can do much to educate itself. The books themselves can also become a resource to be used by other pupils for reading.

**Geoff Maslen**

**TALKING SHOP**

# Children 'turned off' writing

"A CHEETAH would make a sports car look like a turtle." That's how one nine-year-old started her story.

Donald Graves uses the sentence as an example of the quality of writing children are capable of producing, given the right incentives.

Professor Graves himself produces more than his fair share of quotable one-liners. To be a writer, he said in Melbourne last week, you had to be a nudist. You had to (metaphorically) undress yourself.

Yet for years children have been undressing themselves in their writing while teachers have walked around fully clothed, criticising their bodies.

The result has been a turning away from the joys of self-expression through the written word. "Kids have been turned off when writing is seen more as a punishment. Their work has been red-lined out of existence," the professor said.

Professor Graves was in Melbourne at the invitation of Coburg State College, following his visit to the third international English teaching conference held in Sydney last month.

He was here to tell teachers and academics about the findings of a two-year, $240,000 study of how children write. It was done through the University of New Hampshire where he is professor of education.

Donald Graves is something of a Che Guevara among teachers of English, a revolutionary who wants to overthrow the present methods used to get children to write. In the revolution Professor Graves has already started in New Hampshire and other American States, there are no distinctions between the bosses and the workers in literature; everyone writes — teachers and their pupils.

"You can't teach what you don't practice," he said. "Imagine a piano teacher who never played a note?" The problem, of course, was that most teachers didn't know how to write, or at least how to write clear, usable, everyday prose. Most never wrote more than a few comments on a page of students' work.

"We have to help teachers with their own writing, not because they've been negligent, but very few of us in our own school life ever had help with the process of writing."

When teachers had been taught the principles of good writing and practice writing regularly the effect, Donald Graves said, was amazing. They began to publish their own work. Their morale improved; their sense of professional inferiority disappeared. They became more self-confident and their teaching — especially of writing—was much better.

Professor Graves writes for an hour or more every day, no matter what the circumstances, no matter where he is. "Trying to pick up a cold trail is a disaster." And, he said, if children wrote every day they come to want to write, to look forward to it. This also entailed an 'off-stage' process where the child thought about her writing in between times and planned what she was going to write. "Concepts of rehearsal," Donald Graves called it.

The research project Donald Graves heads is called the Writing Process Laboratory and it does more than merely watch the processes children go through in their writing. For the children and their teachers are also shown the techniques of writing. This isn't something that happens through lectures at the blackboard. Instead, the teacher plays the role of an editor working with a reporter rather than a strict grammarian with a magnifying glass trying to locate

"Too much attention is paid to the surface features of writing — grammar, spelling and punctuation — whereas it's the writing process that is important. If the process is developed properly, the surface features will be learnt as a matter of course." This involved a continual process of revision — 11, 12 or 13 times — when a piece was rewritten, discussed with the teacher and rewritten again.

Professor Graves said children had been taught to believe that rewriting one's work made you a dummy. Yet revision was an essential and a vital part of the process of learning to write.

"Revision is the key," Professor Graves said, adding that a single story might take a child three or four weeks to complete. The emphasis was on quality not output, on helping the child discover how to make his writing more vivid, better punctuated and the writer more conscious of his reader.

Oddly perhaps, the continual revision, the re-reading, greatly improves this reading ability.

"We used to think that you had to be able to read before you could write," Donald Graves said. "That's turned out to be the biggest myth of them all. It's the other way round."

Professor Graves left Melbourne late last week to go on to Scotland where he will continue spreading the seeds of revolution.

—G.M.

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Published by the Primary English Teaching
Association of Australia

The entire book is about the National Institute of Education Study in Atkinson, New Hampshire.

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# Renters and Owners:

Donald Graves, Professor of Education at the University of New Hampshire, is concerned with what happens when children write. Together with two research associates, Lucy McCormick Calkins and Susan Sowers, he has been studying the behaviour and development of young writers in a New Hampshire elementary school over two years with a particular focus on eight 6-7 year olds and eight 8-9 year olds. This study has been based on principles which distinguish it from almost all work previously done on writing. It actually looks at young writers before, while and after they write, using human observation or the eye of the video camera. It places enormous importance on the contexts in which any act of writing is performed. It is anxious to see what developing writers can teach us, and one another, about the processes of writing and the processes which surround writing.

Graves is critical of 'experimental or retrospective studies that move in with treatments of short duration, or that speculate on child growth and behaviours through a mere examination of written products alone. Contexts must be broadened to include closer and longer looks at children while they are writing. These contexts must be described in greater detail.' (*Language Arts*, February 1981.)

While in London recently, Graves gave an interview to *The English Magazine.*

# Donald Graves on Writing

**I wonder if you could say something about what it was in the nature of previous research on writing, or in the design and effects of previous research on writing, that led you to set up the New Hampshire study in the way you did.**

Yes. There were two things that led to the change in style of the study. One was the first study that I did on the writing processes of 7 year old children — that followed Janet Emig's case study on the composing of 12th graders; just getting wet with that helped me to see the possibilities. Emig looked at what writers did while they were composing. The other thing was reviewing the literature over the last 25 years in writing research. The main trend has been experimental. You want to know which is the best approach for teaching writing. So you take approach A, B, C and D and you try one treatment after another, and you check the writers beforehand and you check the writers afterwards, and on the basis of that you decide which treatment worked best. Now the problem is you think you're controlling what's happening. But it's just about impossible to control things. I seriously question whether you can control things statistically since that kind of research does not present the context in which it occurred. People did experimental research before we knew what it was worthwhile even checking out; we didn't know what was significant that was going on. Case-study research is done when you try to find out what the significant variables are. What *are* the things that are worth looking at? And the way you determine what's worth looking at is, you look at it. Then you say, on the basis of the evidence, well, we'd better follow that one and we'd better follow that one, because it looks like every time the person does this that counts for so much in the entire process. So the purpose of case study and the purpose of process research is to find out first what do they do when they write. We haven't even done that yet.

In other fields they follow the same pattern, that is, they had to go through this painstaking experimental kind of study before they said, gee, you know maybe all the things that we're looking at weren't worth looking at. We'd better back off, spend lots of time in observation and then work back from there. We see the same thing in the early days of entomology; all kinds of study of the structures of insects but nobody ever watched insects to see how they did things. Jean Henri Fabre turned that around. It would be unheard of in the field of child development not to spend hours and hours observing children before we said how they developed; but we've been saying how writers develop without ever watching them. Now we're gradually getting back to this middle ground of being able to see writers in the process of doing something; in other words, we're seeing things in context. What we're recommending now, and fortunately there's some good trends in experimental research, is to spend large amounts of time describing the circumstances in which the data is being gathered. The thought was, if we can produce data independent of environment, we'll be able to generalize better. You just can't do that; you can't rule it out. We have to put the context back in, no matter what kind of research we're doing.

**So given the particularity of the situation you were looking at in one elementary school, were you conscious as you started that there might be problems of people wanting generalisations to emerge from that particular set of circumstances?**

The generalisations can go in these ways. One is, here's some things you probably ought to look at. The other thing that does stand up is the length of the case study that we have. You move into a different phase when you do case study for long periods of time because you have detailed research built up with small numbers which is, in fact, much more generalisable to larger groups. If you do a one-month case study you can't generalise in the same way that you do when you take 16 students and you have literally thousands of recordings and thousands of time-lapse data on them, so that the trajectory in changes is much more clearly seen. Now that kind of thing is more likely to produce features of general interest.

**Could you nominate some of the things that you would see as general features to emerge from the study?**

Yes. The whole issue of voice. Voice which is carried in any writer's transition from speaking to writing; every writer goes through it. Now, what do we see? We see children coming into school, entering school with strong voices at the age of six and gradually they're reduced to whimpers after that. The schools take away voices, to be blunt. What do I mean by voice? I mean the imprint of the person on the piece of writing. The way in which a writer chooses, selects and organises information towards the writer's own intention. The voice is the frame of the window where the person is present around the information so that the reader can see through the information like a glass, and see it clearly with the writer getting out of the way but being present enough to shape it so that it can be seen. Now, what happens in school is that we keep cutting writers down to size with our critiques: 'this child could stand a little more humility, huh.' Writing is a scary enough event as it is.

questions – but in that order. We see, for example, that with young writers it is very important for them to have people speaking on their pages, sound coming off the pages, uses of interjections and so on. They want the voice to be explicit on the page and then gradually it becomes implicit in the writing as the writer matures and develops. But it seems to go through those steps of being explicit and then implicit. It needs very careful handling by the teacher with lots of speaking, I might add, lots of oral conference work with the writer, where the writer speaks about the topic, finds the voice orally and then quickly does the writing before it evaporates. I'd say that for me has been one of the most important findings.

**Could you just characterise that? What comes out as immaturi in a young child, in having a voice on the page?**

Oh – how does it show itself?

First it's explicit. The first thing that the child does is speak simultaneous to writing. The voice is present; and we find und situations of stress that this happens with professional writers or older writers too. A second feature which comes in, let's say with writers particularly from the age of 10 on, are writer that like to jive: you know, this banter back and forth orally with friends. They get one line down and have to talk to some body immediately: they're re-enacting the oral discourse. And then back they'll write a little bit more, then they start talkin again, hitting almost the same pauses that they do in oral discourse. Now if you have a room which absolutely forbids any noise of any kind – you know, 'Writers at work – shut up' – you're in for big trouble because you're cutting out an essent part of the writing process. Admittedly there have to be limit to that. Another feature shows in what we call prosodic mark or speech features in the writing on the page. The writer, say capitalises important words; I do this in my own writing. I'm typing along, suddenly I look – sure enough, I've capitalised key words. I was afraid that the importance of that word wo not be implicit enough so I make it explicit. Or I'll see writer capitalise all of the letters in a word; they don't even know t they're doing it. It's useful for teachers to know that writers who do this are not *sinning* at this point; they want the voice to be explicit. The way you tell this, by the way, is to ask writers to read their pieces out loud; look over their shoulde and as their voice is at work you'll see features in the text th they didn't even know they were putting in. Another is whe writers take the pencil and blacken in letters; the writer writ 'the fish bit', and he writes 'bit' two lines high; blackens 'bit all over; the writer doesn't believe that the power is implicit there in the word to show me that it *bit* – it has to be made explicit. Then you run into another kind of explicitness: the flow of adjectives and adverbs, where you have an extreme romanticism, if you will. You know – 'the pretty, cuddly, slimy little thing'. This is a phase where they think that it's not really good unless you have adjectives in there, unless y can make the colour explicit. It's the mark of the sophistica writer who can say, if I have a string of adjectives here I don really believe the noun is strong enough. And probably a lo times it isn't; so now I go back and I look at the noun. It ta a while before the child realises – or a writer of any age rea – that writing really can stand on its own two feet. So you have these features needing to be explicit before they can become implicit, before I can have enough confidence in th power of my voice that the words, in fact, do stand.

Then you have, for example, the writer's growth of conscio ness – that is, what writers think they are doing. Very, ver important data. One thing we find in our data is that you a a writer. 'How do you write?' and they give you a very sty version. Writers don't know how they write. I don't know I write. It's not uncommon for there to be a whole year's between what writers actually do, and when they can say accurately what they do. This is a fallacy of retrospective research. You just don't know. We find that writers need t words, a very important step in my growth of consciousness of what I do is to apply it to someone else, because I can see something in your text before I can see it in my own. For example, Susie tells her teacher that she's stuck with her piece on glaciers. She's got so much information that she doesn't know what to do with it. So the teacher says, 'What's the one part that interests you most?' and Susie says, 'The valley glacier.' So the teacher suggests that Susie should just concentrate on the valley glacier to begin with. Susie thought that was a good idea but she didn't do anything about it. But here she is talking to Greg. Greg is stuck in his piece on the white-tailed deer; he says almost the same thing – 'I don't know what to do with it, I've got all this stuff, I've got pages and pages of notes; what'll I do?' She says to him, 'Why don't you write about one deer – just tell all the information through the eyes of one deer and then you can get into the biology of it, their eating habits and all of that,' and he could see that. Now about two months later she applied it to herself, but first she applied it to Greg. It's a definite route in a person's growth of consciousness of a piece.

Another very important line of development is how writers learn to revise; that is absolutely central to our study. There's a definite sequence to what they change. The first thing they change is the motor parts: they don't like the way the handwriting looks, or they don't like the way a drawing looks. Next they don't like the spelling and they want to change that and make that better. The next thing they change will be the topic: 'that's a bad topic, I'll try it about this topic'. You can see the progression moving away from the mechanical and coming more and more towards content and information. Then the next thing that they are interested in is, parts that are missing. The easiest way to help someone revise is to add something; the most difficult is to delete. You have to complete a sequence, you have gaps in your information, alright? You add, add, add, until it gets complete. But the problem the writer then runs into is the problem of selection. The writer is doing what I call the bed-to-bed story. The story is about being lost on a mountain. 'I got up early in the morning, I went down, I had some pancakes and we got all our gear together, we got in the pick-up truck, and then in the car we had a flat tyre on the way.' You don't think you'll ever get to the mountain, but the person writes all the way up, has two paragraphs lost on the mountain and then three pages coming back home, 'we all went to bed, had beef stew and were tired.' You know that kind of thing, it's bed-to-bed, no selection. But the person had to go through the process of including everything before the teacher can come in and say, 'Wait a minute, what for you is the most important part?' Now the child may have started out to write about being lost in the mountain but in fact is much more interested in the car breaking down. 'Alright, tell me more about that.' Well, in building up the data in the one part, the rest of it starts to fade. 'Well I guess I didn't really need this part.' You see, the writer didn't know how to get into the subject, so gets out of bed in the morning, goes all the way through before coming to the important piece.

So it seems clear to us from the study that there are quite definite steps in learning to revise. Finally you have the person who unconsciously selects and revises even before they come to the page; that to me is the most sophisticated of all. That is the person who writes daily, and that's the big case for daily writing. All writers are helped by this; the toughest writers, the ones that have the most difficult problems, are helped by daily writing because they don't have to start all over again every day, there's just a little carry-on. But we actually find, to be blunt, some Mozarts in our midst – kids who in fact will rehearse a text for as long as three months before they come to the page. So that when they start off actually writing they're not starting off at Mark I, they've already been through six or [illegible] This is our child Amy

would make a sports car look like a turtle.' What a use of metaphor. It's indecent that an 8 year old can do that. You feel like squashing them, especially if you've had a bad morning of writing. But we found out two years later that she would rehearse extensively before she came to the page; she didn't even know she was doing it. Two years later she said, 'I think I know how I write . . . '

**What would you see as the major implications for the teaching of writing that emerge from your study? What practices could we do without, what practices might be encouraged?**

What could we do without? Writers who write and have no response. I think for a piece to be ignored is even worse than having someone do a critique. There are all kinds of pieces of writing that have at the top 'good', 'well done', 'you worked very hard on this'. Generalised statements that are absolutely contemptuous of writers. Every piece has a right to be received. In other fields there've been studies of what happens when learners or human beings are ignored; far more dangerous things happen with human beings who are ignored than even those who are attended to negatively. All of us have had papers with professors; you've worked for six weeks on a piece and then got 'A' in the upper righthand corner to keep you quiet, and then 'good' under that. That's tragic. Or another thing is response that attends to surface features only, to the accidents of discourse: 'You could change your typewriter ribbon', 'Couldn't you consider attending just to spelling and handwriting?' In other words attending to the etiquette of a piece. Now etiquette is important in its place, it cannot be ignored, but when it is focussed on exclusively what we have is writers who end up with writing to whom it may concern; there's no-one there, the voice is not present. No-one's going to write an intimate piece to someone who is going to make fun of the clothing they wear when they put their whole body forward.

We need to have teachers who write themselves, I just can't stress the importance of that enough. And teachers need help with their own writing – where they have their writing responded to as they would hope to be able to respond to students' writing. The reason that many teachers don't write with students is (1) it's never occurred to them; (2) they've never ever seen a human being doing it in their entire lives. But for me the metaphor is, when you write you undress, and if you want to be able to write well you have to be willing to be a professional nudist. Now there's nothing more upsetting than to have someone walking around fully clothed in a nudist camp, and that often is the teacher, saying 'Hmm, well, that's a funny navel', 'Hmm, didn't the Lord give you a better body than that one?' I think that's immoral.

It is also important for writers to publish – that is to be able to share with a broader audience than one, a teacher. A writer is stuck who has to write for one person; I don't know what I'd do if all my writing went only to one person. It's like being in a prison cell and having every day someone come, shove some bread under the door and you shove the tray out, and you get to know the one guard only. It builds up a funny view of the universe if you only see yourself, your most intimate self, through one; it's devastating psychologically, even when the person is a skilled teacher who gives criticism well. How much more important it is when I'm working well to find out that a whole class, indeed an entire school, can know me as a writer, as a person with something worth saying. We find that amazing things happen psychologically, major behavioural shifts, when that person's territory goes beyond one to 20, to 50, to 120, to a school, to a community, to a broader metropolitan area. It's just amazing

**Can you say something about what you've observed, good and bad, in the difficult area of teacher-pupil interaction over writing?**

Right. It's good when the writer teaches the teacher about the my yap shut when this writer here is writing about what I know a lot about, and I'll say to this writer 'Did you know my great-grandfather was a whaler?' and the kid's wiped out. I think that because I've had interest in the Beatles and you're writing about the death of John Lennon, that you'd be excited to know I have a great Beatles collection; I've taken the piece right out of your hands, thinking that I'm identifying with you, when in fact I'm destroying you. So that I need to ask questions that will help you to teach me about what you know – that's the good side. The big issue that usually comes up is the one of how do I find the time to do that. That's the greatest issue of all. But there isn't the problem of time when you're not having the two-day assignment. You know the two-day assignment. I give the assignment on Monday, you take it home Monday night, you pass it back on Tuesday, I take it home Tuesday night, correct it, pass it back, you fix it up on Wednesday – that's what I call embalming the corpse. The two-day assignment doesn't work. You can't see everyone in two days. When the pieces are developing slowly the pace is different, and I have the time to listen to you and to help you help others to listen. Another bad thing is when I attend to language early in the game and ignore information. The pyramid is, you start by attending lots to information and as you gain control of the information you can now start to raise questions about confusions in language and confusions in organisation. But the worst thing I see is the corrected first draft where spelling, punctuation, information, everything, is supposed to be sorted out. There's a whole mixture of things that absolutely bedazzle the writer and how does he or she know what to begin to work on? It's impossible. So there's a definite pyramid, I want to stress that, in what you attend to.

Writing conferences (whether one-to-one, or group meetings on the progress of writing) can deal with the writing in draft from choice of topic, through first draft, to final draft. In early drafts the conference centres on information, the writer finding a voice, to later drafts where the focus is on refinement of language in relation to meaning. The conference emphasizes the importance of the child teaching others about the subject with the teacher trying not to imply a greater knowledge of the subject than the writer, but instead questioning and skillfully reflecting the writer's handling of the topic. Let's have an example. This is part of a conference between Jill, a seven year old, and Mrs. Egan, her teacher, as recorded by Barbara Kamler in the Atkinson School study:

| | |
|---|---|
| Mrs, E: | Where do you keep a cockateil? |
| Jill: | In a cage! |
| Mrs. E: | Like Munchkin? (resident guinea pig) |
| Jill: | No. A bird cage! |
| Mrs. E: | Oh! A bird cage! |
| Jill: | You know that! (exasperated) |
| Mrs. E: | But if I were a person who didn't know what a cockateil was, I might be confused by that. |
| Jill: | Mmmm. (tolerant) |
| Mrs. E: | Think now, Jill, about Gus. Does he always stay in the cage? |
| Jill: | No. |
| Mrs. E: | No? |
| Jill: | Of course not! He got *bit* by the dog! |
| Mrs. E: | You're kidding! The dog bit him? |
| Jill: | Yeah! He ate one of the feathers and then threw up. (voice becoming higher and more animated) |
| Mrs. E: | Oh, no! So Gus gets out of the cage on purpose. Do you let him out? Or is it a mistake? |
| Jill: | No! The dog comes in the den, and now he knows not to come in when the bird's on the floor. |
| Mrs. E: | Now let me get this straight. The bird comes out of the cage because you want it to come out of the cage. You open the door? |
| Jill: | He has a choice. |
| Mrs. E: | You mean he knows how to open the door? |
| Jill: | No, we open the door! |
| Mrs. E: | Alright. You ask Gus if he wants to come out and if he does he comes out of the door. |
| Jill: | No. It's his choice. |
| Mrs. E: | So you just leave the door open and he . . . |
| Jill: | (Not letting her finish) YEAH! |

For ten minutes they discussed details of the bird like this. Then it was time for Jill to decide what information to add to the book. Mrs. Egan did not decide: she guided Jill's selection process. The directive, pushing teacher began to move back from her position of control so that she could return responsibility for the writing to the child. At the end of the morning Jill had made extensive content additions and developed her story further.

**The idea of a pyramid of things to attend to in this way is a nice one, but a lot of teachers of writing have the feeling that the conventions have somehow got to be fitted in pretty quick. When you look at a piece which has got invented spelling, there' a voice inside you reminding you about the outside world.**

That voice is real. I mean, that writer will be punished in society for not spelling well, for not having good handwriting and for using poor grammar, before that person is punished for poor information. That happens so much that the teacher's instinct to save this person from punishment is not an unreal one. The interesting thing in our data is that when writers become the owners of the piece and don't rent it, they just talk differently. Most writers rent their pieces and the teachers own them. Renters speak differently from owners: renters say, 'Let him fix it – I pay my rent'; owners say, 'In the spring we're gonna re-seed the lawn, in the fall we're going to put in a new partition here with an opening between the kitchen and the dining room'. Now what happens is that the owners – and the ownership occurs at the point of the information – get very fussy about the *appearance* of the place. So in reality the surface features are helped more by ownership than by renting, and that comes up again and again in the data. When writers take over they say, 'Oops, I mis-spelled the word'; the teacher doesn't even have a chance to get a word in there because they don't want their property to not be respectable in the neighbourhood of the community of writers.

**Would you agree that the attitudes and strategies you have found to be most helpful to the development of writing are more difficult to achieve in secondary than in primary schools**

Yes. It's much more difficult. No question. So many things happen in secondary schools that make the teaching of writing difficult, that violate all that we know about process: the interruptions in the life of a secondary teacher, the things that take the control of teaching itself away from that teacher in the classroom. When a teacher's control is taken away, they take control away from the kids. If the teacher has more autonomy more control over time – over the time in the day and how th can use their curriculum – that person can listen. But it's very hard for a person who feels she's going to become redundant tomorrow, being spied on day and night, whose kids have to take an examination at the end of four weeks, that person cannot control. How can that person listen? How can that person set it up so that the writer teaches them? It's very, very hard. Someday we need to show how the structures that teachers have to work under, in fact, take control from the teacher, who in turn is forced to take it away from the learner The teachers we've been working with had a lot of autonomy and they had it because the Head knew kids and was confiden in herself and was able to be specific with the teachers about what they knew about the process of teaching. I started to write something about this problem, it was going to be in my book. The reason I stopped writing it was, it would provide too many excuses not to do something tomorrow . . .

**Donald Graves' book *Children Write* will be published in the U.K. by Heinemann in 1982.**

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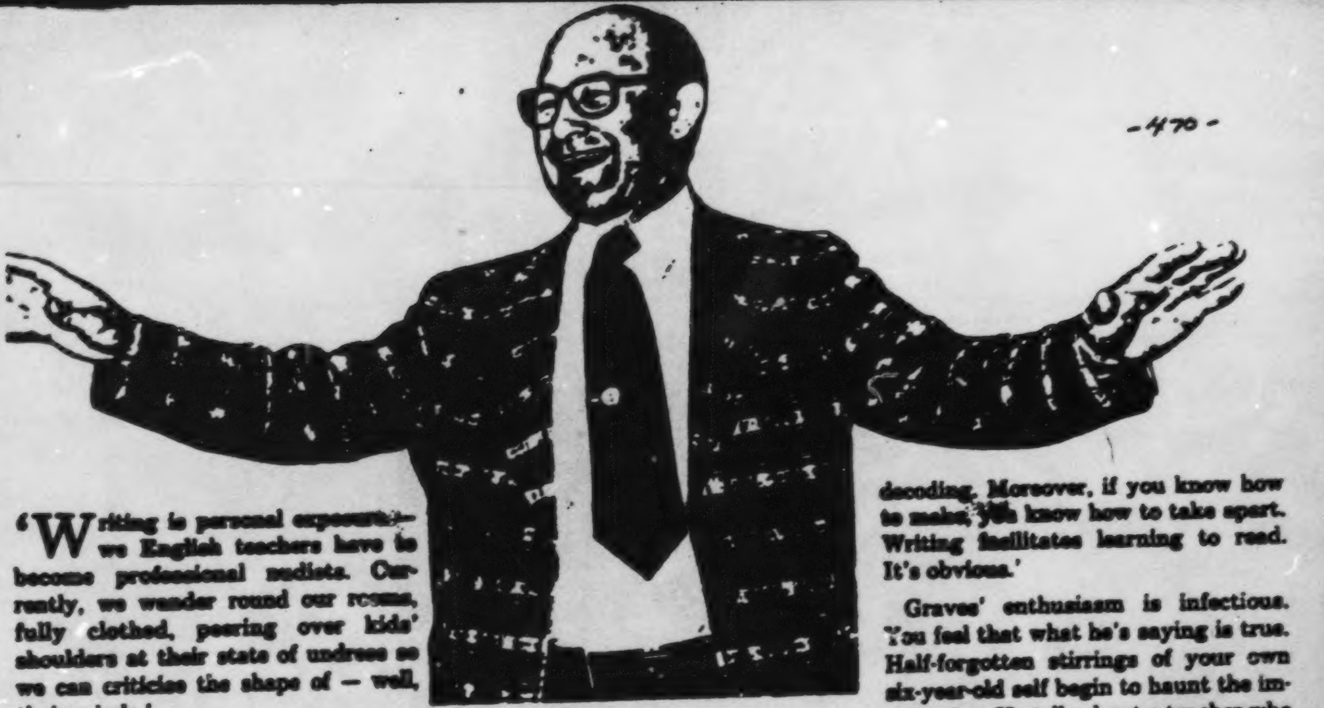
# Donald Graves

## The Professional Nudist

Donald Graves is a crusader committed to teaching children to write as a means of expression. This genial Professor of Education at New Hampshire University in the United States was in Australia late last year as guest of the Primary English Teaching Association at the Third International Conference on the Teaching of English, held in Sydney. He is to make a return visit next year. The PETA publication, *Donald Graves in Australia*, was published recently. During his stay in Australia, Professor



'Writing is personal exposure — we English teachers have to become professional nudists. Currently, we wander round our rooms, fully clothed, peering over kids' shoulders at their state of undress so we can criticise the shape of — well, their minds.'

Graves has turned away from mere theories of how children learn to write and designed a practical research project. He is processing information that is forcing educational theorists to rethink traditional teaching approaches. His main contention is that teachers, in their anxiety to cope with society's pressure for basic 'literacy' in primary school and subject specialisation in secondary, deny children the right to 'gain control' of their own writing development and find personal relevance in it. What the child writes is really the teacher's 'property'. No wonder the child, not 'owning it', soon loses interest. But teachers will only understand this and other writing problems of children when they do some regular writing themselves in classroom conditions. 'Teachers should be practising writers,' says Graves, 'then they'd understand writing-as-process, and find out why it's as natural to avoid writing as it is to avoid really teaching it.'

By doing at least one piece of writing each week alongside the children, a teacher is reminded that writing is not just a matter of getting the conventions or mechanics correct. Writing is above all a thinking problem, of finding out what to say and how to arrange it effectively. Teachers too, find writing difficult. By exposing their own problems with writing, teachers show children that they are not alone in their struggle to clarify meaning.

'When you go to a pottery class, you don't expect a teacher to thrust clay in your hands and say: Throw it! You ex-

'We still tell kids: Choose a topic from the three on the board — you have 30 minutes to write . . . 30 minutes then — chop. Who can write in that kind of situation? So we teachers get the essays that such an approach deserves: trite, cliched, boring.'

you how. Yet English teachers try to teach writing as theory, as generalised advice. They don't understand that writing is a craft to be practised. Writing is doing. Children learn by example and by doing.

'Surveys show that 90 per cent of children start school believing they can write, whereas only 15 per cent believe they can read. Their primary instinct is to make marks. They mark marks on everything before they come to school — walls, sidewalk, wet cement, steamed windows. It's a kind of self statement: I am here.

### Egocentric

'When children start writing they're so egocentric, they're absolutely fearless. Writing is a magic code and they want to learn it. Our teacherly stance has been that children should learn to read and then get into writing. On the contrary, studies show that

decoding. Moreover, if you know how to make, you know how to take apart. Writing facilitates learning to read. It's obvious.'

Graves' enthusiasm is infectious. You feel that what he's saying is true. Half-forgotten stirrings of your own six-year-old self begin to haunt the imagination. He tells about a teacher who started her group of first graders (six-year-olds) by handing out writing books she'd covered with wallpaper left-overs, each with a child's name clearly printed on the cover. 'This is your own writing book,' she told them, 'so you can begin writing now if you like.' After grave reflection, they all did: a few could already write sentences, some wrote only their names, others 'scribbled' or simply drew pictures. Not one child said 'I can't write'. Only two out of 25 said, 'I can't spell'. For those two, the teacher wrote 20 of their spoken words on the board so they could copy whatever they could, figuring out the words for themselves.

'You can't rush kids' learning process,' says Graves. 'They've got to get a thing straight in their heads before they can make sense of it. So you wait . . . and you wait. . . Our research into how professional writers work has been vitally important because it shows that good writing takes time — lots of it.'

Graves and his two associates interviewed 50 professional writers. They found that none of them ('not one!') considered they had really learnt to write at school. Why? Because they weren't given time to figure out what they wanted to say. 'The amateur, you see, thinks that the first draft is what writing is about: You sit down and the writing pours out. The pro knows it doesn't work that way. He knows that good writing emerges through a succession of slogging drafts — draft after draft after draft. It's the hard work of rewriting that makes the difference.

'Later there is a stage when children begin to look critically at their work. And they don't like what they see . . . this is a crucial period in the child's writing development. He has realised that he doesn't have the freedom to do exactly as he likes. He doesn't need the teacher or his peer group to tell him. It's like ripping a blindfold from a highwire walker over Niagara.'

You really can't rush kids through the complex process of learning to write.'

### Karate approach

So waiting is important. But in our high-pressured society with its anxiety about learning difficulties, we're all victims of the karate approach. 'We still tell kids: choose a topic from the three on the board — you have 30 minutes to write . . . 30 minutes, then — chop! Who can write in that kind of situation? So we teachers get the essays that such an approach deserves: trite, cliched and boring.'

To conduct his practical research Graves chose a small rural school with a 'strong' principal. ('We needed someone strong to field any early questions from parents — and there were some.') The school at Atkinson, New Hampshire, is ideal because it incorporates a cross-section of families 'from the poorest to the affluent'. He doesn't presume to tell the teachers what to do, how to run their classes. ('If you're a guest in a house, you don't begin with a lesson in housekeeping. The important thing for us is to watch what the teachers do and how they do it.) But after two years the teachers have become deeply involved in the research.

He began with 16 children, choosing them for their differences, the antithesis of a random sample. ('Some kids could hardly hold a pencil; a couple could write seven-eight pages at a sitting.') He also follows the development of two 'perimeter' groups of about 150 children. ('We have wall-to-wall data. We "xerox" everything the kids write.') As well as note-making, tape-recording and 'xeroxing', his team employs audio-visual research. A camera, set high, captures a child's hand as he writes, while a lapel microphone picks up even sub-audible words as he talks to himself. Children learning to write and spell commonly speak words again and again before spelling them out on paper. In a Russian experiment, elementary children were instructed to hold their mouths open or to immobilise their tongues with their teeth while they wrote. Prevented from articulating words, they made six times as many spelling errors.

'Yet,' says Graves, 'we still tell kids to 'Stop talking'!' But during their writing time they need the stimulation of hearing words. And nearly all beginning writers need first to draw. A drawing provides a context for the words that will follow. In speech, the context is simply assumed. In writing, you have to state the context.

We watch the kids as they draw and we sidle up, take and look, and ask: 'What are you going to write? Invariably, they say: Wait and see. Which means: I'm not really sure yet; wait till I get the context clear and then I'll be able to write. We must let them alone to take their time. If we hurry them, we turn them off, they get uptight about writing.'

Graves' point is that the children are already writing — about what matters to them, even though their symbols may mean little to anyone else, including the teacher. His voice carries

conviction as he says. 'Egocentricity wears its own protective armour. The child needs it. At this stage he doesn't pause to consider whether anyone else can understand what he's doing. If his writing isn't being understood, then it's not his fault. His audience has the problem. He doesn't.'

### Breakthrough

A great breakthrough comes when a child at last reads back his own writing — and finds that he can understand it. A favourite video clip shows the exact moment. Six-year-old John looks up with a wide spontaneous grin and an incredulous expression in his bright eyes: 'I don't know how I do-ed that!' And Graves hugs him, sharing his moment of discovery.

But later there is a stage when children begin to look critically at their work. And they don't like what they see. ('They tell you: It's dumb. Stupid. Last year, in first grade, I could write — but now I can't write any more.')

'This is a crucial period in the child's writing development. He has realised that he doesn't have the freedom to do exactly as he likes. He doesn't need the teacher or his peer group to tell him. It's like ripping a blindfold from a highwire walker over Niagara. But the child now has to find his own way through, in his own time. It's a natural process of development. At first, the child was simply — writing. He wasn't thinking about audience. Now, he's not

'Writing is personal exposure — we English teachers have to become professional nudists. Currently, we wander round our rooms, fully clothed, peering over kids' shoulders at their state of undress so we can criticise the shape of — well, their minds.'

So what does he do? 'He does what the professionals have learnt to do.' Graves' expression is triumphant. 'He rewrites and rewrites, with the teacher intervening when she's asked — during the all-important writing conferences.'

Regular one-to-one consultations — 'conferences' — between teacher and student are the cornerstone of really teaching writing, Graves says. These usually take only three to five minutes, but extend if the teacher senses a child's need. In the conference, the teacher helps the child to articulate what it is he's trying to write, to develop his meaning, to 'make sense' for an audience.

What about the 'mechanics' — handwriting, punctuation, spelling, grammar? 'Don't push them,' he says.

'Don't start emphasising errors. What you pay attention to, you reinforce. If you harp on errors, the children wil feel they can't write. Whereas, in fact, they are learning to write at an enor- mous rate. Through writing itself and also through the conferences, as the months go by, the mechanics improve rapidly. It's a sort of natural learning through activity, interest and example. It's so much better than direct so- called skills teaching through boring exercises. Too often in today's schools such skills are mere push-ups for a game never played.

'Sure, product is important — it' what we're about. But we mustn't los sight of the person with our constant emphasis on product and error. And remember that the product only im proves if the person develops. That' why it's so important to get teachers writing'

Graves himself is a member of writing group, committed to writ every day. (His first request on arriva at a Sydney motel was for a typewrite His routine is to come back from a five kilometre run, eat breakfast, then si down at the typewriter.)

Yes, Professor Donald Graves is crusader. You could say he's America' dynamic counterpart to Britain's M Chips — while looking like a Fri Tuck. He constantly strikes tho childhood chords that still vibrat within all of us. If we'll only listen. . .

*Professor Graves will be returning Australia next July to conduct in-servic courses on his writing teaching methods.*

*Laurel Dumbrell is a Sydney freelance writer and creative writing course teacher.*

# WRITING READINESS

## An experimental program demonstrates that children can and want to write much sooner than we had thought. Its findings are likely to upset some educational apple carts.

### BY ANTHONY BRANDT

In Mary Ellen Giacobbe's first-grade classroom at the Atkinson Academy, a public school in Atkinson, New Hampshire, a little girl named Phebe is sitting cross-legged on the floor in a corner of the room reading through a pile of books. She has chosen them from shelves packed with a couple of hundred similar books, slim little volumes bound with dental floss and covered with brightly colored wallpaper samples. Donald Graves, head of the Writing Process Laboratory at the University of New Hampshire and a familiar figure in this classroom, leads a visitor over to Phebe and asks her to read one of the books out loud. She is glad to comply.

"*The 66,000-Mile Space Flight*," she reads, fluently and accurately. "My 78-man crew was going crazy from gases that were leaking in through the holes the unexpected meteor storm had caused. My crew was so sick they were nothing but trouble. They had been beating me on my head with an oxygen tube.

" 'All right!' I said. 'Line up at the door.'

"They lined up at what they thought was the door. I pressed a button. '*Whoosh*.' They were in the garbage tank.

" 'That's that.' I said.

"Something had gone wrong. The spaceship had stopped. I opened the emergency window. I was right. It had stopped. I decided to explore I put on my spacesuit and opened the door. I wandered into a meadow.

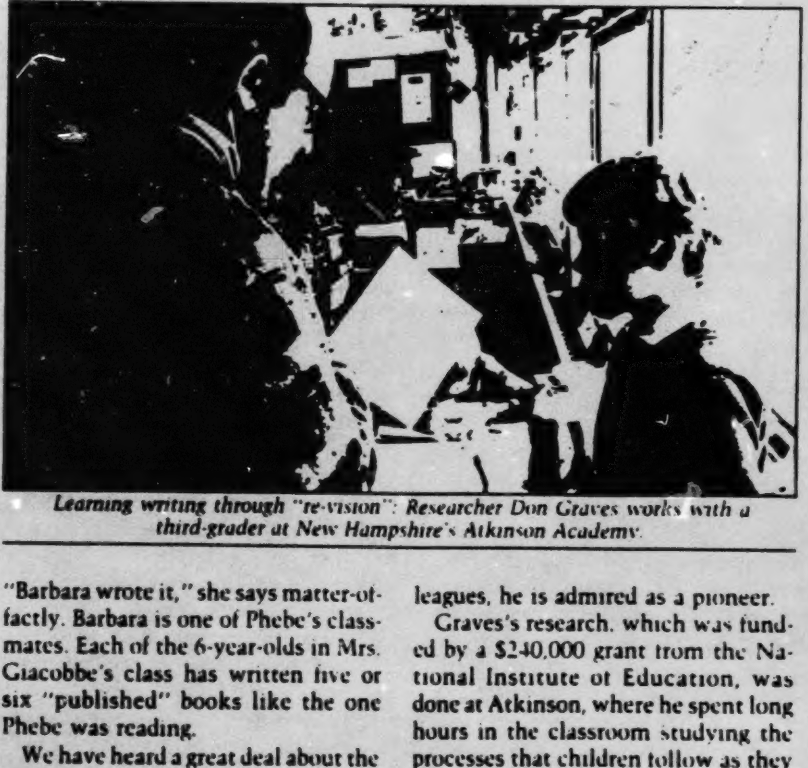
"Suddenly a bearlike creature appeared!

"The bear chased me. The bear soon got lost. I headed back to the ship. Just then I saw how many holes the meteor storm had caused.

"I went in the ship to find something to patch it up with. I found some old tools and some metal and patched the ship.

"On the way back I turned on the meteor deflector."

And who, the visitor asks Phebe, wrote this remarkable little book?



*Learning writing through "re-vision": Researcher Don Graves works with a third-grader at New Hampshire's Atkinson Academy.*

"Barbara wrote it," she says matter-of-factly. Barbara is one of Phebe's classmates. Each of the 6-year-olds in Mrs. Giacobbe's class has written five or six "published" books like the one Phebe was reading.

We have heard a great deal about the "writing crisis" in the United States. There is obviously no writing crisis at the Atkinson Academy.

The Atkinson children's proficiency in writing is largely the result of a fruitful collaboration between Atkinson teachers and Don Graves. Graves, an educator in his early 50s, is a friendly man with the low-key, reassuring manner of a doctor; he confesses, in fact, to having once had ambitions in that direction. Instead, he has become an innovator in the teaching of writing and one of the leading researchers in the field. Among his colleagues, he is admired as a pioneer.

Graves's research, which was funded by a $240,000 grant from the National Institute of Education, was done at Atkinson, where he spent long hours in the classroom studying the processes that children follow as they develop their ability to write, and videotaping the children at work on their stories. He is now writing a book, a report of his findings entitled *Writing Teachers and Children at Work*, to be son can truly make it his own.

His switch to writing, he insists on pointing out, was somewhat opportunistic in that he was under the impression that not much had been done with that field, and that it might be more open to exploration than would reading. He was right. Very little research was being done on writing, and what had been done was being ignored. No one, moreover, was doing the kind of research that Graves thought should be done. Virtually no researchers actually spent time with children, watching them think out a piece of writing, develop it, change it, throw it away, start it over again. All of them were looking at the writing that kids were doing, but not the process that was producing it. It wasn't that people weren't interested, but practically no money was going into writing research, and the kind of research Graves envisioned is quite expensive to do. Then the so-called writing crisis came along, and things began to change.

The problems with writing in the United States are not just media hype. Government publications and internal memos are so poorly written that some states have had to pass "plain English" laws enforcing standards of brevity and clarity on the writing produced by government agencies. President Carter, shortly after his inauguration, issued an executive order to federal bureaucrats to write their endless memos and reports in readable English. Business people constantly complain that secretaries, junior executives, even highly touted MBAs, can't spell, can't construct grammatically correct sentences, can't express themselves clearly in writing.

Before he began his Atkinson project, Graves traveled all over the United States and to England and Scotland, with the aid of Ford Foundation money, to talk with leaders in the field of research on writing. At the same time, he also did a great deal of additional spadework on his own and finally produced a 180-page manuscript that he promptly reduced to 28 pages "so that people would read it." His report, *Balance the Basics: Let Them Write*, is an eloquent plea for increased attention to writing, which includes fascinating bits of information about the depth of the writing crisis in the United States. Graves notes, for example, that the volume of first-class mail is dropping, evidence that people are writing fewer letters. He found out from a sample of representative school districts that they were buying less lined paper, which is used mostly for writing.

*When children are encouraged to write regularly, Graves says, their scores on standardized tests of reading "really pop the cork."*

In the long run, Graves's research will probably have its most important impact on our expectations of what young children can do. Like the poet Kenneth Koch, who encouraged ghetto children to write poetry, Graves has uncovered some extraordinary talent in the children whom he studied. He speaks about one third-grader who seldom revised anything she wrote because it came out exactly the way she wanted it the first time. He quotes one of her lines: "A cheetah would make a sports car look like a turtle." A first-grade boy named Michael regularly turned out long, elaborate, well-developed stories furnished with such lines as: "As I glanced out the window, I saw the boy creeping along the fence like a spider." Michael handled words like "simpathetaclly"—his own spelling—with consummate ease. The accomplishments of the less talented children were even more revealing. One boy didn't even speak until he was 4 years old, and came to first grade well behind the others in terms of development. By the end of first grade, he was writing competent stories and revising them.

The important thing in teaching children to write, Graves says, is not to put too much emphasis in the beginning on spelling, punctuation, and grammar; those things come later, as the beginning writer gains confidence in his ability to express his thoughts and feelings and becomes more versatile in using that ability. A young writer with a developing sense of his own voice, a growing command of what he wants to say, will pick up spelling and good grammatical practice as he needs them. The research at Atkinson demonstrated this tellingly; these children were generally far ahead of their age level in their knowledge of mechanics, even though they had never been taught mechanics formally. Mechanics were taught as the occasion demanded as aids to clarifying whatever a child wanted to say.

Graves thinks that his research findings, though developed with small children, have obvious implications for the teaching of writing at all levels, and he is working on other fronts to alleviate the writing crisis. He's part of a group of faculty members at the University of New Hampshire who meet regularly to criticize one another's writing in an attempt to improve their own writing skills. He was also on the faculty of the Vermont Writing Project, one of many spin-offs of the Bay Area Writing Project, a national program of annual summer institutes designed to teach public-school teachers how to teach writing, and to help them with their own writing, too. It's hard to teach children to write if you can't write yourself, and Graves feels that teacher training of this sort is essential.

Most important, Graves believes in the power of writing as an activity, a process, a way of learning about oneself and the world. "Writing if nothing else teaches you what it is to know something," he says. Writing that gets things right, that says precisely what you want it to say, is a goal you reach only by mastering your material; for most people it's a struggle, but in the process of struggling you find out exactly what you know and don't know. Take kids through that process, says Graves, and "they develop a much deeper sense of what it is to know." ◆

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Anthony Brandt, a journalist, is currently working on a book about the American Dream.

***Children's skills in revision develop predictably. First, youngsters correct misspellings. Much later, they learn to delete irrelevant details.***

**published later this year by Heinemann. It is a book that could very well change our ways of thinking about how children are taught to write in the United States.**

Perhaps Graves's most important achievement is documenting what some good teachers have recognized intuitively: that children can and want to write a lot sooner, and a lot more often, than most people think. "If kids are given the chance to write, they will," says Graves. He arranged to give them the chance at the Atkinson Academy, where, from 1978 to 1980, he did research with children in the first through fourth grades. During their first day in school in the fall of 1978, the 22 children in Mrs. Giacobbe's first-grade class were given writing materials and asked to write something. Only two of them said they didn't know how; the rest sat down and wrote. They couldn't spell or punctuate, of course—some of them weren't even sure about all the letters of the alphabet—but they were more than willing to write, and Mrs. Giacobbe made it a policy that they would write every day of the school year. Most writing instruction doesn't begin until considerably later, after children have learned to read; but it was one of Graves's working assumptions that children are much smarter than we give them credit for. "Most systems undercut what kids can do," he says. Mary Ellen Giacobbe agrees: "I feel very strongly now that children come to school knowing a lot more than we think they do."

Another important finding has to do with revision. It was standard practice in the research groups at Atkinson for the teachers to go over a piece of writing with the child who wrote it, asking questions intended to help the child clarify what he wanted to say. The teacher also held group conferences at which other children asked questions of the writer. As a result of this sometimes intensive questioning, the children eventually developed a sense of audience; they knew that they were writing not just for themselves and not just for the teacher, but for everybody in the classroom. They began to pay attention to how their readers responded.

And they began to revise. Previously no one believed that children could or would revise until much, much later, and in the standard writing curriculums the teaching of revision, if it is taught at all, comes at the end, sometime in the middle grades or in high school. At Atkinson, first-graders began revising by the sixth or seventh month of school, and by the time they were in the third grade they were taking pieces they wrote through as many as 14 revisions. Why? Because they wanted to "get it right," to say exactly what they meant to say, and in such a way that what they meant to say came through clearly to their readers. Graves says about revision: "It's very, very important to learn to revise a piece . . . in order to learn what it means to deal with information and control it, continually pushing and pushing until it's right." One result of this constant attention to revision is that the children become unusually sophisticated about how to get clarity and cohesion into writing. "The way some of these kids are talking about writing," says Graves, "you'd swear you were in a doctoral seminar."

Graves has found that the process by which children learn to revise follows a fairly predictable developmental order, beginning with mechanical changes: Misspelled words are corrected, smudges on the page are erased, and as children learn the conventions of writing, such as punctuation and capitalization, these, too, are corrected as needed. Later on, as mastery of the mechanical aspects grows, children revise the contents of a piece, adding information where they think it might help clarify, locating and focusing on the most interesting aspects of what they want to say, and eventually reorganizing the entire piece and excluding irrelevant information. Graves points out, however, that the steps are not mutually exclusive. A beginning writer, a 6-year-old, say, may be most concerned with correcting his spelling and getting *that* right, but he will sometimes make other kinds of changes as well, even major revisions in content. "From the outset," says Graves, "children are able to make changes in most of the . . . areas." The order of development is not strict but flexible, in other words, and it varies from child to child.

Revision is the key to the whole process of teaching children how to write, Graves believes. If writing is a way of communicating what one sees and thinks about the world, then the teacher's job should be to help the child clarify what he writes so that there are no barriers to keep his audience from understanding what he sees and thinks. The seeing and the thinking originate with the child, not the teacher; the teacher plays a kind of middleman, what Graves calls a "counterpunching" role. He has to figure out "what the kid is about, what he has in mind," and help him resee and rethink it until it's clear, not by telling him what to say but by asking questions.

"You can't teach what the kids don't see," Graves notes; you teach what they do see, and only help them to see it better—to "re-vision" it. For instance, young children rarely see, on their own, that their writing is flawed by overinclusiveness. (In this, of course, they aren't too different from a lot of adult writers.) Their unrevised stories often follow the bed-to-bed formula: The main event may be a wedding, or the experience of getting lost on a mountain, but the writers have given equal space to everything that happened to them from the time they got up in the morning until the time they went to bed at night. In such cases Graves may ask, "What part of your story do you like best?" or "What will interest your readers most?" More often than not, the question helps the writer to see that cutting out peripheral facts will help to

> *For Graves, revision is the key to teaching very small children to write, partly because it gives them a sense of writing for an audience.*

heighten the impact of the story.

This is not how writing is usually taught. The standard curriculum in the early grades concentrates on developing children's expressive or "creative" abilities, and, as they get older, increasing the emphasis on mechanics—spelling, punctuation, grammar. Both kinds of instruction take place more or less *in vacuo*, with little or no attempt to relate what is being written to any possible audience besides the teacher. Until very late in the game, perhaps the last year or two of high school, instruction in revision concentrates on mechanics and only then is some attention finally given to the organization of information.

Perhaps even more critical, children receive no instruction in writing until they have learned to read. One of the most significant findings of Graves's research, the aspect of his work that he's now pursuing in a new research project, is that if children are allowed and encouraged to write from the beginning, then reading and writing skills will develop in tandem and thus reinforce each other. (The idea is not entirely new; some teachers have long made a practice of writing down stories dictated by preschoolers to let the children see their own language in writing.) As Graves puts it, "If you know how to *make* reading, you decode it much better."

At Atkinson, there were no boring Dick and Jane readers in Mary Ellen Giacobbe's first-grade classroom. It was her idea to "publish" what the children wrote and use their books, along with some of the classic children's books, to teach her students to read. She typed the books in large type, had the children illustrate them, then bound them in the wallpaper-covered boards. The books sat on a shelf, more than a hundred of them, and children were free to browse among them at their leisure. The result? The students' scores on standardized reading tests have, in Graves's words, "really popped the cork."

Because Graves's findings are likely to upset more than a few educational apple carts, he is somewhat sensitive about his methods and tends to see himself as a bit of a scientific maverick. His research lacked the controls upon which scientists generally insist: He didn't include any children who were *not* given the kind of instruction that the research group received, and there were no independent observers and no double-blind studies. Graves was simply in the classroom every day for two years, either alone or with one of his two assistants, Lucy Calkins and Susan Sowers, recording everything the children did from the moment they moved to the writing table until they had finished writing a piece. Graves admits that "if you don't have an experimental design with significant controls, then the data are not regarded as useful." But he contends that this kind of direct observation is the only way we can really find out how children learn to write.

Not surprisingly, Graves's scientific heroes and models are two scientists who also scorned the use of controls in favor of direct observation of their subjects. One is Jean Piaget and the other is the French entomologist Jean Henri Fabre. Both men based their theories on observation.

Graves, too, had an early interest in biology, although in college he majored in English. During the Korean War he served in the Coast Guard, and while based in Boston and still undecided about what he was going to do with his life, he spent his spare time in a pathology laboratory helping with post-mortems; it was then that he entertained thoughts of becoming a physician. During the same period he took a course in Russian at Harvard. His work with this difficult language got him to thinking about how children learn their own language, which in turn prompted him to take some education courses. This led him to an interest in reading instruction, and eventually to a teaching position in the Fairhaven, Massachusetts, school system. In 1963, pursuing a growing religious interest, he was ordained to a ministry of education in the Presbyterian Church. In that capacity he worked with Indian tribes in both upstate New York and Maine in church-sponsored literacy programs. In 1968 he left the church and went back to public-school teaching, this time in Buffalo. At the same time he became director of a language program in nearby Lackawanna that offered English instruction to no fewer than 55 different national groups in the area, speaking 12 different languages. Later he became co-director of urban-teacher education at State University College in Buffalo. He also managed to earn a doctorate in education at the State University of New York at Buffalo. Finally, in 1973, he came to the University of New Hampshire as a professor of early childhood education.

Graves acknowledges a certain restlessness in his career, but there is a theme underlying all these changes. The same theme can be discerned in his switch from the field of reading (his specialty during his years as a teacher) to that of writing, a move he made while he was working on his doctorate. Graves says he became "sick of the field of reading" because it was hung up on reading materials and paid too little attention to the active acquisition of knowledge. The emphasis in both reading instruction and the literacy programs he was involved with was unbalanced, he says; too much weight was given to the taking in of information. He was interested in "what people could *do*, as opposed to what they could absorb." He draws a dichotomy between process and product. The product is the reading text itself, or the test designed to find out how much information you can spit back, or the paper you produce for your teacher. Real education, however, is a process—the active process of reading and writing; knowledge must be manipulated and expressed, says Graves, before a per